

THE IMPACT OF THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES
OF EDWARD SAID, GAYATRI SPIVAK,
AND HOMI BHABHA ON WESTERN THOUGHT



CHAKRABARTI

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The Third-World Intellectual
in the First-World Academy

Sunit Chakrabarti

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Sumit Chakrabarti

With a Foreword by
Swapan Chakravorty

The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston•Queenston•Lampeter

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chakrabarti, Sumit, 1975-

The impact of the postcolonial theories of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha on western thought : the third-world intellectual in the first-world academy / Sumit Chakrabarti ; with a foreword by Swapan Chakravorty.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-1457-0

ISBN-10: 0-7734-1457-6

1. Postcolonialism. 2. Said, Edward W. 3. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 4. Bhabha, Homi K., 1949- I. Title.

JV51.C27 2011

325'.3--dc22

2010051285

hors série.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Front cover photo/design by Subhasish Karmakar

Author photo by Evan Williams

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The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092-0450

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
CANADA L0S 1L0

The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.
Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM SA48 8LT

Printed in the United States of America

To Ma and Baba

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FOREWORD

It is hard for a visitor at a US campus today to imagine that there was a time in the not too distant past when it was rare to find a scholar from the 'developing' world among the faculty. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the compelling circumstances of the Cold War induced strategic studies, and a short-lived discipline then known as 'area' studies. American aid, such as food under Public Law 480, was often paid for in the currency of the poorer nation, and this was spent on acquiring books for US institutions or on short-term export of US academic personnel. In 1965 Lyndon Johnson rescinded the Asian quota in American universities, and the new Aliens Act resulted in a fivefold increase of Asian students.

However, interest in decolonized economies was different from hiring scholars with roots in these regions. A probable exception was the field of development studies, especially in economics, which drew some of the best scholars from countries such as India to the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s area studies gradually yielded to comparative politics, while development economics lost its initial shine. At the same time, the focus shifted to the study of literature and culture, to the increasing dominance of the English language following decolonization and the heady

years of the 1960s, and to the sober assessment of the solidarity of culture and power. Many of these traits are all too familiar now in what is known by the short-hand 'post-colonial studies' or of 'poststructuralism', and it is a feat of the imagination to remind ourselves that the ideas were once considered strange, if not inimical to humane studies. The hiring policies of the universities were slow to respond to the changes. Scholars from the so-called 'third world' stood a better chance now, but they were the ones who had won their spurs in the more orthodox streams of literary studies and other disciplines.

The three writers studied in this book shaped the culture of those years as much as they were shaped by them. Spivak's Preface to her translation of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* was published in 1976, and Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. Bhabha's early essays on representation, colonialism and mimeticism started to appear from 1984, and his introduction to the Pluto Press edition of Franz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* came out two years later. One of the key problems for these writers was their own location as scholars with, to use Sumit Chakrabarti's terms, third-world roots in the first-world academia. The issue is equally important across the economic divide of North and South, and has become more acute in recent times with the increased integration of the academic job market and the growing domination of the English language and English literary studies in the age of the Internet. In this

sense the book addresses an issue that is still contemporary, for the flawed fit that it lays bare between the professional training and political positions of the writers it studies is still a relevant problem.

Chakrabarti argues that the nature and method of the ‘discursive formation of power...operates implicitly but inevitably to sustain and perpetuate the superiority of Western epistemic systems’. One of the problems is that the postcolonial writers he studies are students of that system—resistant students, but students nonetheless. None of these writers actually engage with alternative epistemic systems, in the sense in which it is undertaken by, say, the philosopher Bimal Krishna Matilal, again a ‘third-world’ scholar who attended Quine’s classes at Harvard and taught Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford. For Matilal, Western epistemic systems could act as the resistant interlocutor (*purbapaksha*) against Indian schools of logic, and he organized symposia in which Sanskrit pundits could meet and cross swords with professional Western philosophers.

This is not the alternative that a public intellectual such as Edward Said had any use for. The immediacy of political engagement ensured that they would act as the perverse speaker of truth, the *parrhesiastes* who could resist the pressures of official reason. Speaking the ‘truth’, however, has more than a negative hermeneutic ring when one is writing a critique of a discourse such as orientalism: one may hope to expose the epistemic rules that constitute

the field of truth without making any positive claims about its content. This often leads to finicky self-awareness and dense theorizing, and Chakrabarti demonstrates how Said grew increasingly impatient of the deferrals of professional theory.

Spivak takes a more oblique route, and her efforts to rupture the rules of Western theory and pedagogy from within are well analysed by Chakrabarti. The trajectory of Spivak's development as critic ultimately makes the question of her location marginal. She had once said that, 'I resist being located because I think—an old-fashioned idea—that education is about other people, other places.'¹ Spivak has sturdily stuck to this idea (and she resents being called a diasporic Indian²) through the many stages of her evolution as one of the leading critics of her time. The fact that the question of location can now be accorded its rightful place is not least because of the pioneering work of the writers Chakrabarti looks at, not least of Spivak herself.

With Bhabha, the question of location enters the world of the postmodern, the field of anxiety and ambivalence. Chakrabarti uses the case of Aurobindo Ghose, Bengali revolutionary, a poet who wrote in English and deemed sage, to illustrate Bhabha's point. Subaltern historians of India have been trying to address this issue of a

¹ Swapan Chakravorty et al, *Conversations with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Seagull, 2006), p. 144.

² Ibid., p. 33.

derived modernity in a colonial setting with an occasional mix of Marx and Heidegger. It is only logical that Chakrabarti should move on to this aspect, and append a discussion of some problems of what he calls 'foundational historiography' in India. The book makes the views of these recent historians accessible, and concludes with an unforced transition from the discussion of literary theory to the philosophy of history. Exhaustive and lucid, this study should prove to be a significant contribution to postcolonial studies, literary theory and historiography.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the following persons and institutions/organisations for making this book possible:

- Professor Swapan Chakravorty for writing the Foreword and for being my academic guru and inspiration.
- Professor Udaya Kumar of Delhi University and Professor Krystyna Kujawska-Courtney of the University of Łódź for their close reading of the manuscript and critical comments.
- Patricia Schultz of Edwin Mellen Press for her invaluable editorial help and patience in the preparation of this manuscript.
- Andrew Tomlinson, a dear friend, for painstakingly proof-reading the entire manuscript, and suggesting crucial changes.
- Subhasish Karmakar, another dear friend, who designed the cover for old times' sake.
- Evan Williams, a valuable friend and colleague, for his editorial help and also for my photograph at the back of the book.

- Aleksandra Kula, a former student and a great friend, for a lot of invaluable technical support.
- Nandini, my wife, for her intellectual support, suggestions, technical help, and most of all, for going through it all.
- Routledge for permission to quote from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993) and *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

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INTRODUCTION

In these first few pages I intend to write a working introduction to the thesis that follows in the next five chapters. I do not want to clutter the introduction with notes and references, and have kept it to a minimum, as most of what I discuss here will be taken up in greater detail in the chapters that follow. In this book I have chosen to examine the writings of three Third-World intellectuals who have worked or are working in the First World. Before I go into an elaboration of my project, I would like to qualify the terms First World and Third World. In the period that we term post-colonial, the Third World has had a crucial role to play in terms of not only political alignments and/or economic balance of power, but also in terms of the development and proliferation of social and cultural theories and schools of thought. The study of social and political theory, in fact the entire spectrum of the study of the humanities, has seen the inevitable presence of the Third World and its intellectuals. As a student of literature, and of the humanities by default, I was naturally provoked by this strong presence of the Third World in this scene of socio-cultural studies and the consequent development of newer theories of representation.

Throughout the book I talk a lot about the workings of power and its links with knowledge formation and epistemic systems. I daresay, the centre of power (in terms of what we mean by the phrase in social theory) is still tilted to

a large extent toward the First World and the precincts of its universities and other socio-political establishments. One of the primary endeavours of my thesis in this book will be to examine the nature of this discursive formation of power, and how it operates implicitly but inevitably to sustain and perpetuate the superiority of Western epistemic systems. On the other hand, the presence of the Third World in the socio-academic scene has consistently attempted to undercut this discursive superiority through myriad disruptive projects and strategies of counter-discourse that have met with moderate success in the past few years. The three intellectuals from the Third World, a selection of whose works I have taken up for study, have perhaps been the most influential presence in the academic scene in terms of this politics of deliberate disruption. More importantly, all of them have worked from within the First-World academy, and used their (the First World's) tools to counter their superiority. This I have found most interesting, and in my work I have tried to point out how each one of them has been uniquely (even if moderately) successful in their project of intervention and counter-politics.

By the term 'intellectual' I have generally meant academics who work in the field of the humanities and the social sciences. My area of expertise is confined to a moderate knowledge in the field of the humanities, and I could not dare to venture beyond its confines into the sciences and other forms of intellectual pursuit, like the fields of technology, or commerce, or management for example. I am sure that each one of these fields has also its

own mechanism of representative politics, and its own ways of dealing with the workings of power and hegemony. Little doubt the selfsame equations about the division between the First World and the Third, and the consequent power struggle is also intrinsic to these fields of knowledge. I shall now briefly talk about the different chapters where I have elaborated my project.

Chapter One: The Intellectual and His Location

Towards the beginning of the first chapter I have tried to put the intellectual in perspective vis-à-vis the scope of my work. As already said, I have generally spoken about those intellectuals who are directly or indirectly associated with the field of the humanities and the practice of social and political theory. But within the field of the humanities itself there are sharp divisions in the roles that the intellectuals play. In his Reith Lectures delivered on the BBC in 1993 Edward Said had comprehensively discussed what he thought the role and function of the intellectual should be. Among the many divisions that he made between groups of intellectuals, one was that between the yea-saying intellectuals and the nay-saying intellectuals. As the nomenclature suggests—one group says ‘yes’ to all the policies and decisions of the centre of power, while the other group maintains a safe distance from the power-centre, and consistently plays an oppositional role. Said, of course, belonged to the latter group and laid emphasis on how the nay-saying intellectual was playing the role of a society’s conscience and speaking truth to power. In this context I

have discussed the role of the *parrhesiastes* and the practice of *parrhesia* as explicated by Michel Foucault in his book *Fearless Speech*.¹

But these are not the only roles that the intellectual plays. There are intellectuals such as Theodore Adorno who confine themselves within a private space and engage in the pleasures of acquiring knowledge, or in the pursuit of an all-encompassing morality that would emancipate the world. These intellectuals rarely come out and address the general public, but maintain a cultured, cynical distance between themselves and the masses. This is more or less a humanist's apolitical space that does not involve itself with the discursive dynamic of the state or its manipulations of power. Julien Benda, for example, imagines the intellectual to inhabit a universal, neutral space that exists beyond national boundaries and is not qualified by ethnic identity. He talks about such intellectuals as Jesus, Spinoza, Voltaire or Ernest Renan as examples.

But people such as Edward Said have problematized this debate about the intellectuals by opposing the almost simplistic logic laid down by Benda. He sees in the World Wars, in the advent of the Cold War, in the emergence of the Third World—the birth of a much problematized representative space where Europe or the West ceases to be the unchallenged standard-setter for the rest of the world. Thus, I have discussed in the book how these Third-World intellectuals who I talk about have opened up the questions of representation or ontology or epistemology towards a

multiplicity, generally unforeseen in socio-philosophical debates earlier. The kind of intellectual that Benda imagines, ones enmeshed in metaphysical speculation or in the pursuit of non-material knowledge, is almost extinct as a species today in the surge of anti-humanist theoretical writings across the globe.

According to Said, then, the intellectual today has a defined public role. He has to address the general public on the issues of justice and freedom. He prefers the presence of such intellectuals as Jean-Paul Sartre or Bertrand Russell who have a defined political presence in their respective societies. I lay emphasis primarily on this aspect of Said's work. For someone who has been shaped by the writings of such humanist scholars as Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, his understanding of the role of the intellectual more in terms of intervention than anything else is revelatory about the kind of role he wants the Third-World intellectual to play.

The Discipline of History

One of the major roles that the Third-World intellectual has played is in problematizing the very discursive discipline of history and to meticulously nurture a debate about historiographical elisions that have been symptomatic within the conception of the discipline of history. History, for them, has become a conglomeration of knowledges that are tentative, and constructed by historians under all kinds of presuppositions and pressures. The conception of 'truth' thus becomes contingent to the dynamics of discursive authority,

and hence becomes an open-ended 'text' riding on the whims of various centres of power.

In this context I have discussed Paul Ricoeur's conception of history in his celebrated book *History and Truth*.² Ricoeur sees the search for a singular truth to be immediately affected by a mark of violence, and by the phenomenon of authority. He moves gradually from the theological to the social and the political, and shows in these structures the imperative for the formation of a singular truth that could be discursively upheld as a mark of authority. The role of history within a political system, he says, becomes identical to the role of theology within a clerical system. Thus, as early as the sixties of the last century, historians like Ricoeur were trying to problematize the writing of history and find out the power structures implicit within its disciplinary parameters.

With the rise and growth of such revolutionizing theoretical tools as deconstruction or New Historicism there have been consistent attempts at the relativization of historical thought with the sudden breakdown of Western discursivity and the creation of multiple centres of power. There was a slow but consistent movement towards postmodernism and this led to the very systematic study of historiography and historicisms. All the three Third-World intellectuals I write about here share alike the distrust for simple historicisms. They are, on the other hand, in favour of heterogeneous, conflicting and incommensurable histories. I have discussed this aspect of their work in much detail.

Historiography

Since the study and development of historiography has been one aspect of my work, I have tried to talk about the historiography of India as a case in point. I have discussed how the master-narrative of Indian history has generally been qualified by a pervasive Eurocentrism. The development of the discipline of history in postcolonial India, be it nationalist or Marxist, has minutely followed the set paradigms of Western modernity. Historians such as Sumit Sarkar have insisted on how the development of modern Indian history as a narrative of transition has remained incomplete due to the over-dependence on modernist paradigms. However, even as late as the 1980s Indian historiography was still unprepared to step inside the inchoate ambiguity of postmodernism, and create contingent textualities within historical formations. But with the works of such intellectuals as Ashis Nandy or Dipesh Chakrabarty or Gyanendra Pandey or Gyan Prakash, we can daresay that Indian historiography was surreptitiously setting its foot onto the uncertain domain of postmodernism. As I discuss the works of the three intellectuals—Said, Spivak and Bhabha—I consistently bring up this question of history and its implications for the postcolonial intellectual.

The Problematic of Location

The location of the intellectual within such an ever-evolving dynamic of the creation or dispersal of knowledge is inevitably qualified. The intellectual becomes automatically enmeshed in the web of representational metaphors that are

incessantly trying to situate him/her within set schools of thought or modes of historicity. This is why, in spite of the perfect awareness of the differences between the respective fields of work of the three intellectuals I talk about, I have had to club them together under the umbrella term Third-World intellectuals. But I have also carefully tried to locate their points of departure, and the way each one of them has worked towards his/her individual representation/non-representation.

As I talk about the Third-World intellectual in the First World there is implicit within it the trope of displacement, that is a movement away from home. This idea of displacement is also multi-layered, as there are different forms of displacement—the exile, the émigré, the expatriate and the refugee. I have tried to touch upon the implication of each one of these terms—as forms of movement away from ‘home’. Each one of these movements is qualified by its own set of contingencies, and hence the kind of representational anxiety is different for each one of these sets of people. However, there are times when they intertwine and overlap, making representation a more complex issue to negotiate.

Coming back to the specific question of the intellectual, the problem of representation or representability of the Third-World intellectual is also somewhere linked to the principle of honesty (may be I have unconsciously fallen into a humanist trap in this sentence). What I mean is that this honesty lies in the extent to which the intellectual is willing to compromise his/her position of institutionalized

power in order to defend the representational metaphors of the margin (the Third World in this case) against set principles of domination of the West. Since all the three intellectuals I discuss in the book have been/are very powerful presences in the western academia, such a question perhaps becomes an imperative.

Chapter Two: Edward W. Said

In the second chapter I have discussed some of the works and the representational politics of Edward Said. The publication of Said's book *Orientalism* in 1978 was a landmark in the field of postcolonial studies. Although there were others before him who had worked and written on the subject of Orientalism such as S.H. Alatas, A.L. Tibawi, Talal Asad or K.M. Panikkar, Said's work was unique in its own way. By not limiting himself to strict disciplinary boundaries, but by exploring the various and different disciplines of politics, geography, culture or history—Said was opening up the debate on Orientalism toward a much wider perspective than his predecessors had possibly done. He was successful in creating a heterogeneous space where the complex mechanism of protest against Western essentialism could be laid out. The one interesting aspect of Said's work that struck me at the very outset was how he balanced both humanist and anti-humanist influences in his work. On the one hand he was deeply influenced by the works of humanist thinkers like Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, while on the other he liberally borrowed the ideas of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. The multi-

dimensional nature of his scholarship and the diverse issues that he addressed makes it considerably difficult to fix a definitive base of influence in Said's work.

Amateurism and Worldliness

In Said's initial years as a critic the influence of Foucault was very evident—particularly Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge. However, Said never quite agreed to the strategically impersonal nature of power that Foucault had enumerated. It can be said that he concretized Foucault's metaphysical conception of power and applied it to the very political and necessarily instrumental nature of imperial discourse. By the mid-1970s Said had already almost abandoned Foucault for his pervasive pessimism and moved on to the likes of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's writings on the subaltern and his insistence on heterogeneity attracted Said. He was immediately impressed by the rebellious quality of Gramsci's writings. However, in course of time, he had to abandon Gramsci as well. I shall take up this issue in detail later.

By the time Said had grown out of Foucault and Gramsci, he was trying to search for newer and more novel idioms of representation both for the Third World in general and the Third-World intellectual in particular. He became increasingly impatient with the very sophisticated approach of literary and cultural theory and insisted that the intrinsically political and emancipatory nature of theory should never be denied. He thus emphasized the need for 'amateurism' and 'worldliness' in the critic. As the amateur,

the intellectual needs to come out of his specialized coterie and assume an active public role, so that he can connect directly to the common public. In his idea of worldliness Said expresses a need for criticism to return to the real world where the critic is politically active and becomes a voice of dissent who speaks for the people to the centre of power, all the while located at a probing, uncomfortable distance from it. This is the function of the public intellectual—a role that Said has played throughout his working life with more than moderate success. He has played the role of the *parrhesiastes*, and been more of a public intellectual than a professional. By consistently addressing the Israel—Palestine debate, and making no pretensions about his championing the cause of Palestine, Said has, in the true sense of the term, been the Third-World intellectual who has asked uncomfortable and demanding questions to the centre of power. What I have insisted upon throughout my argument is that Said has never been an armchair intellectual, but a very active political presence who has practised what he has preached. Said has thus successfully answered the question of honesty that I have raised about the Third-World intellectual in my first chapter.

***Orientalism*: Scope and Critiques**

I have also discussed in some detail the reception and criticism of Said's *Orientalism* across both the First and the Third Worlds. The most serious charge inflicted on Said was about his choice of methodology. Critics such as Dennis Porter and Michael Richardson discovered a methodological

confusion in Said's *Orientalism* while Aijaz Ahmad, in a rather longish essay, raises questions about Said's privileged location, his veering towards postmodernism and his provocation of Third-Worldist nationalisms. But perhaps the most serious attack on Said was lodged by Bernard Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Studies at the Princeton University. In a long-winded argument Lewis tries to prove how Said had completely misunderstood the project of Orientalism—either because he lacked knowledge of the entire history of such a discipline, or he deliberately distorted facts in order to suit his political purpose. However, there were glaring inconsistencies in Lewis' account as well. He looks upon Said as a historian who was trying to rewrite the history of the relationship between Europe and Islam. However, on the other hand, what Said was trying to do was something very different. Through his multi-disciplinary technique he was trying to reconsider the entire epistemic format of reading that was in vogue in Europe, and, by default, in the rest of the world. He was trying to re-examine the power-structures that are always operative within the discursive dynamic of disciplinary studies across the world. What he attempted was a deconstruction of the disciplinary paradigms that have, for a period of time, influenced our study of history and society as a whole. As Said himself later argues that in *Orientalism* he was trying to liberate intellectuals from the shackles of systems such as Orientalism.

Contrapuntal Reading: A Strategy of Resistance

Ultimately, as I have discussed in this chapter, Said was trying to articulate a new strategy of reading. He called it contrapuntal reading, something that would not directly oppose the discursive practice of reading already in vogue. What it would do, on the contrary, was resist attitudes of hegemony inherent within the politics of reading. The whole idea behind such a contrapuntal reading was to establish the quintessential hybridity of cultural forms and initiate a fluidity that would surpass a simplistic rhetoric of blame. This he adapts and continues in his next book *Culture and Imperialism* where he delineates a history of resistance against empire and its hegemonic forms of discursive socio-cultural practice.

On the whole, I have tried to show in this chapter how Said's enterprise as a Third-World intellectual was to address the politics of space, and use the metaphors of imperialism and culture as correlatives that would place the problem of representation within a cultural continuum.

Chapter Three: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

In this chapter I deal with the writings and the locational dynamic of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The fundamental difficulty that most readers face in approaching her works is primarily methodological. At times it becomes almost impossible to locate Spivak within any specific school of critical or philosophical thought as she categorically refuses to be assimilated within the set boundaries of any particular discipline. Although her readers have consistently tried to

locate her at different times as Marxist, or feminist or deconstructionalist, she has consciously eluded all such labels to maintain an ambiguity about her disciplinary location. What I discovered in the course of my study of Spivak's works was the fact that this was a well-founded strategy on her part to frustrate the essentialist agency of the First World. The fact that she was comfortably located within the First-World academy and opposing its agenda of essentialism was a tradition that she was continuing from Edward Said. Only, one must admit, her strategies were much more indirect, elusive and complex and most definitely veered towards the uncertainty of postmodernism.

Gayatri Spivak was, of course, an ardent admirer of Edward Said and termed *Orientalism* as the source book of the discipline of postcolonial studies. However, there were some major differences in the basic agenda of Said and Spivak, which I have discussed in some detail at the beginning of this chapter. The primary difference, of course, lay in their respective functions as intellectuals. While Said preferred a well-defined political role as a public intellectual, Spivak has always preferred an obtuse and ambiguous presence, so that she has been all the more difficult to essentialize by the strategies of the West.

The strategies of counter-discourse that Spivak assumes are interventionist in nature. She discovers aporetic gaps within the texts or deliberate catachrestic misreadings, which she uses as sites to found her interventionist critique. There is always a certain fragmentary and disruptive quality

of immediacy and an element of surprise in her work. Like Said, Spivak also has very diverse interests that go beyond her immediate academic engagement. She has consistently written on subaltern historiography, the international division of labour, the question of the gendered subaltern, and thus there is an implicit quality of heterogeneity in her work. Thus, her role as the Third-World intellectual in the First World is defined by a contingent and arbitrary quality. What she perhaps attempts to do is to administer a deconstructive rupture within the apparent or imposed homogeneity of Western discursive constructs.

I have also written about the politics of pedagogy in the Western academia, an area on which Spivak has thought and written extensively. Spivak's attempts at the problematization of aspects of Western pedagogy primarily focuses on the location and representation of the Third-World woman. She talks about the woman question from multiple perspectives, and multiple locational anxieties, the woman trapped in localized or globalized or sexual identities, each of which is nurtured by certain essentialist politics. One of the chief aspects of Spivak's work, I feel, has been to unshackle the identity of the woman (herself included) from various homogeneous essentializations, and open up the woman question towards heterogeneous formations.

However, one need not misunderstand these claims of rupturing the politics of Western pedagogy as ways of trying to negate or cancel out the cultural or theoretical tools

of the West. On the contrary, very much like Said, Spivak is also attempting a negotiation between cultural paradigms in a way that is symptomatic of postmodern cultural productions. She definitively argues against a sanitized cultural space inhabited by the Third-World postcolonial critic by virtue of his/her first hand experience or cultural origin. She prefers instead a participation in the selfsame techniques of Western cultural hegemony that have been used for dominance and subjection, and subverting or fracturing them from inside. She adopts a unique technique of disruptive intervention. She chooses a text from the Third World—Mahasweta Devi's *Stanadayini*—that tells us the story of a woman called Jashoda, who has gone through multiple formations of marginality—and opens up the text to multiple elite readings. This was an excellent strategy of disrupting the supposed pedagogic superiority of the elite academic from the First World. I have tried to note in my discussion on Spivak's analysis of *Stanadayini* how, through such a reading of a Third-World text in the light of metropolitan culture theory, Spivak was keeping the question of representation alive in the academy. The multiple and ever-evolving possibilities of representation are explored through this one brilliant attempt at reading a Third-World text.

Spivak's Use of Deconstruction

Spivak has used deconstruction as a very effective tactical tool in most of her works. She uses deconstruction as a way of multiplying possibilities of interpretations to show the

pluralistic nature of experience. She examines radical critical schools in the West and shows how even they sometimes fail to locate aporetic discontinuities within a text and hence fall prey to essentialist agenda. In this context, I have tried to discuss her very unique conceptions of 'reconstellation' and 'catachresis'.

What I found most enlightening about Spivak's technique was her use of a strategy of affirmative deconstruction. She warns about how a mere reversal or subversion of dominance would only initiate another supplementary or parallel move towards appropriation. She, therefore, insists on a reversal that also engenders a displacement of sorts so that the intended agenda is not cancelled out by a more powerful opponent. Her technique of affirmative deconstruction is a kind of ideology-critique that enables this kind of displacement through the appreciation of an intrinsic heterogeneity that is ever-present within a class, or a group, or a collective. I have discussed, how, through the intense consciousness about this heterogeneity, Spivak founds her technique of affirmative deconstruction.

Spivak and Feminism

For many years now, and in spite of Spivak's consistent shirking of labels, she has been known as a feminist in the larger part of the academic world. In my thesis I have discussed the various aspects of Spivak's engagements with the question of the woman. What I have noticed is how Spivak completely abandons the kind of feminism that critics

such as Julia Kristeva practise. She sees Kristeva's critique as embedded essentially within Western cultural practice. Spivak sees Kristeva primarily as a representative of the First World, whose solutions against male essentialist practise cannot be offered to the nameless, faceless, marginal woman of the Third World. Spivak much prefers the works of such off-beat and radical feminists such as Hélène Cixous and Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas. I have attempted an analysis of the similarities between the techniques of Spivak and Cixous, and tried to find out the reason behind Spivak's preference for Cixous. Cixous attempts to locate the woman out of the trope of binary oppositions laid down by patriarchy. Her belief in poetry incites her to search for a metaphorical kind of motherhood that connects two women beyond the reaches of patriarchal hegemony. Spivak appropriates this technique to try and establish a relationship between the metropolitan woman (Third World or otherwise) and the gendered subaltern. She continuously emphasizes the dispersed and differential identity that Cixous gives to the woman. Taking cue from such a model of differentiality Spivak intends to raise issues of pluralism and heterogeneity through her technique of affirmative deconstruction.

I have also cursorily referred, in this chapter, to the way in which Spivak has also dabbled with the issue of the woman and the writing of history. Spivak frequently talks about the woman who demands a well-defined subject-position in history that has all the necessary implications of pluralism as well as individuality. This also involves a subsuming of multiple agenda into the woman question—

that of class struggle, that of the subaltern Third-World subjecthood, that of the international division of labour et cetera. Spivak like Cixous is attempting to write a history of the woman that is a blend of the personal, the national and the international—something that is indeed ambitious and arbitrary, and in a sense poetic. This, I have felt, is one way of trying to consolidate the position of the Third-World or subaltern or marginal woman on the one hand, and her own position as the Third-World intellectual in the First World on the other.

In another section I have discussed Spivak's use of deconstructive feminism. Indeed, although a student of Paul de Man and an academic who has worked within the school of American deconstruction—Spivak is somebody who has, in later years, come out of the tradition of American deconstruction and practised deconstructive criticism in a very unique and singular way. While discussing the woman and the risk of assimilation in terms of representation, Spivak throws in the idea of the non-assumption of positions. She takes the postmodern dynamic of representation to an extreme point of sophistication where even the assumption of a momentary positionality is seen with scepticism and the risk of assimilation. In this context it seems that the focus on non-representation, the emphasis on reaching beyond the ontological is the moot point of her politics. This use of deconstruction is almost unique to Spivak. Deconstruction, at its differential limit, makes it possible to talk about the woman from without the politics of essentialism. I have tried to show in this discussion how, in her re-reading of Derrida

into the question of the woman, Spivak has seen both the theories of deconstruction and feminism in a new light.

The Subaltern Historians

On and off Spivak has been associated with the school of Subaltern Historiography. In my discussion on this aspect I have shown how initially Spivak was all praise for these historians, as they have tried to show the deliberate cognitive failure of elite historiography in terms of textual representations of marginal history. Like Spivak, this group has also been a consistent practitioner of affirmative deconstruction, in its continuous vacillation between the use of sophisticated theoretical tools on the one hand, and a direct participation in the heterogeneous identity of the subaltern, on the other. However, Spivak is unhappy about the way these historians have approached the question of the woman. Spivak feels that here they have been unable to strike the deconstructive mode, and revolve within the same discursive paradigms of bourgeois humanism. This could perhaps be the reason why she has gradually distanced herself from the workings of this group, although there is still a pronounced sympathy for their mode of methodological approach otherwise.

What I have felt in the course of my reading of Spivak is that, perhaps, she is ultimately more interested in the question of the representation of the woman, than about the location of her origin—the Third World. I have tried to show how she has gradually and carefully come out of her position of ethnic minority, the Third-World intellectual, and

taken up the resistant reader's subject-position as she defines it repeatedly in her writings on feminism and the question of the woman.

Chapter Four: Homi Bhabha

Homi K. Bhabha is perhaps the most esoteric of the three intellectuals from the Third World I shall examine in the book. In this chapter I talk about his works and how his writings have taken postcolonial theory toward an extreme sophistication. Bhabha is the kind of Third-World intellectual who has arrived in the First World academic scene equipped already with postmodern theoretical tools. He deconstructs and re-constructs with ease, thereby playing the game of representation and non-representation, situated on the same plane with his Western counterparts.

What Bhabha does is to lift the problem of representation out of the political into the psychological and allows a free-play of meanings, which are not enmeshed in the discursive paradigms of colonial anxiety. What I have tried to discuss is the difference between the approaches of Said and Bhabha. Bhabha qualifies Said's protests about the problematic of representation and looks to reconstellate it out of its binary logic of opposition or resistance, into a postmodern one of ambivalence, hybridity and homogeneity.

Ambivalence and Mimicry

I have discussed Bhabha's idea of colonial mimicry in much detail. This is because I have felt that this idea of mimicry was a revolutionary one in terms of the politics of colonial

representation. However effective Bhabha's theory might have (or have not) been when applied to the colonial situation, there is little doubt that it has had a massive influence on the contemporary situation of discursive political games in the West. Through his conception of mimicry Bhabha charts a slippage from the legitimate pattern of the colonizer-colonized binary—something that he discovers from his arguably postmodern location. Bhabha talks about the creation of the 'white but not quite' colonial subject who would mimic the colonial master, and help in the administrative logic of the empire. What Bhabha enumerates in his writings is the failure of this project, as the mimic-man strategically uses his ambivalent location and functions contrary to the imperial logic. The desire for mimicry, which is the desire of the colonizer, is eventually transformed into a strategic desire of the colonized, who subverts his location from one of disadvantage to one of advantage.

To elaborate this concept with an example, I then discuss the case of Aurobindo Ghose, the Bengali nationalist-turned-Godman, who used his interdictory location to its fullest advantage. Born to an Anglicized father, Aurobindo was sent off to England at an early age, and restricted from being contaminated by all things Indian. Ghose came back to India and became first a militant nationalist, and later on a religious nationalist. There were also other glaring examples of the native *babu* using his interdictory location to subvert the imperial logic. Some names that immediately come to mind are those of Raja

Rammohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, Fakirmohon Senapati, and such others. In my thesis I have tried to show how Bhabha noticed the advantages of this interdictory, ambivalent location while analysing the effects of colonial discourse. His contrivance of the strategies of mimicry and ambivalence emerged out of an analysis of such a location, and he means to use this strategy in the changed scenario of contemporary neo-imperialism. As a Third-World intellectual in the First World he has realized the advantages of such interdiction, and through his writings he has fruitfully consolidated a theorization of such a plan.

Bhabha had also realized, early in his career in the First World, that there was a concerted and alarming movement towards veiled nationalism in the policy decisions of the Anglo-American world. This has led not only to economic and political domination, but also to forms of cultural imperialism in terms of the control and disbursement of information, the popular media, and creation of specialized institutions and academics who maintain a hegemonic influence over the rest of the world. Bhabha's getting enmeshed in theory is, I feel, an attempt to understand how this tool of theory has only become another power-play of the culturally elite West to produce a discourse of the 'other' that would reinforce the power-knowledge equation. And he strategically tries to extricate the 'other' from this discursive knot.

Enunciation and the Moment of Politics

Another interesting aspect of Bhabha's work that I have discussed is how he is sceptical about making clear-cut distinctions between theoretical practice and direct activism. He insists that, the more there are such distinctions, the easier it will be to appropriate and consequently essentialize these paradigms. He looks at both of them as political applications of a rhetoric of protest. While theory attacks discursive political ideas and principles, activism is temporally bound to a specific and immediate event. I have discussed a debate among Bhabha's critics that was incited by the assumption of such a position. They considered Bhabha to be merely an arm-chair intellectual who was trying to shun responsibility by clever theorizing.

This has led to a discussion on Bhabha's ideas of 'enunciation' and 'moment of politics'. He has seen the political as a hybrid and multipolar space that incessantly qualifies meaning, thereby making 'truth' contingent and relative. He conceives of political positions as ever-evolving, always in a state of flux that allows for the fullest play of all the possibilities of representation.

The Third Space

I end this chapter on Bhabha with a discussion on his concept of the Third Space, where we see a definitive movement towards a postmodern stance. Bhabha dislikes the use of the term 'cultural diversity' and insists instead on the use of the term 'cultural difference'. Through the use of a deconstructive politics Bhabha here locates each subject in a

position of differentiality, where meaning is established in neither the discursive space of the one, nor in the (counter)discursive space of the other—but rather in a Third Space. This Third Space of enunciation allows a free-play of meanings and cultural identities, which could lead to the realization that cultures are neither unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistically enmeshed in hierarchical relations of the self and the other. I have discovered much similarity between the techniques of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. It is only that Bhabha is sometimes even more esoteric and more arbitrary in his locating (or non-locating) of the postcolonial question within the postmodern dynamic.

Chapter Five: Towards the Postmodern

In the final chapter of my thesis I have made some concluding remarks about the kind of influence that I feel these three intellectuals from the Third World have had on the debate about location and representation. One of the most relevant points about the presence of Edward Said in the intellectual scene is how, with a mixture of humanism and anti-humanism in his work, he has laid open a space where other intellectuals from the Third World have spread their wings. The kind of arbitrary subjectivity that we sometimes discover in the works of Spivak and Bhabha is perhaps a continuation of the humanist spirit that can be traced back to Said. However, one must also note that despite the abiding influence of Said, the adoption of anti-humanist modes of theorizing was a conscious choice for both Spivak and Bhabha. This was primarily because of the fact that the scope

of anti-humanism threw up many possibilities of representation that could not have been imagined by Said when he had begun to write.

I have also made some concluding remarks in this final chapter about the possible complications in the use of the term 'postcolonial'. Critics like Arif Dirlik have commented on the use and abuse of the label 'postcolonial', and many of these critics feel that some Third-World intellectuals in the First World have misused it for purposes of personal agenda, that is to say, in terms of consolidating their respective positions within the First-World academy. What critics like Dirlik do not realize, however, is that theorists like Spivak or Bhabha would not remain confined within the developmental pattern of postmodernism either. They would gradually move towards a counter-essentialist strategy where they would refuse all labels and all possible presumptions of positionality. They would attempt to move beyond all attempts at authentication by the Western academy, and ultimately move into a hybrid, heterogeneous political space that incessantly goes through multiple space-shifts and quantum leaps, and refuses all definition or nominalism.

Ultimately, what a critic like Spivak has done is undercut the assumptions of all disciplinary formations. Be it the generation of systems of thought, formation of paradigms of development, or formulating a syllabus for academic pursuit—she ultimately considers all of it to be an essentialist trap. Her continuous spatial vacillations are ways

of evading these disciplinary agencies, and, in a way, even move beyond the problem of representation or representability.

The Subaltern Historian, Again

Spivak's fascination for the Subaltern School of historians is due to their role in bringing both colonial and national-bourgeois historiography to crisis. She is, on the whole, impressed by their attempts to bring the simplistic modes-of-production narrative to a crisis. It is in their attempts at abrupt interventionism that Spivak sees a success of the deconstructive approach. She sees in their deliberate validation of 'rumour' as history an interventionist strategy that establishes the subaltern as the subject of history—a disturbing and problematic reinscription that persistently questions disciplinary formations. I have also discussed in this chapter Spivak's critique of the Subaltern historians for locating the subaltern problematic in complete isolation from both the colonizing formation and other sectors of local society, such as the native elite, to which it is obviously linked. However, she also considers it to be a necessary theoretical fiction akin to fictional constructions used by the likes of Marx or Gramsci or Foucault or Derrida—something that they have to take recourse to in order to critique pervasive hegemonic formations. In Spivak's interpretation of the historiography of the Subaltern School, she finds this kind of isolationism theoretically sophisticated, a dialogic moment of difference that unsettles the structures of academic power.

Bhabha's Postmodern Strategy

In the book as a whole, as in the concluding chapter, I have seen Bhabha as the seasoned postcolonial presence, well-versed in theoretical strategies, ensconced comfortably in the First-World academy—interventionist and discursive(sic). Bhabha's entire project is steeped in a critique of modernity. He basically contends with two versions of modernity—the Enlightenment logic of incomplete modernity and Richard Rorty's argument about the successful completion of modernity. Thereby, he insists on examining the conditions of agency, closure, intentionality or totalization in terms beyond the trope of modernity. This is where perhaps he initiates a move towards postmodernism. Here I have elaborately discussed Bhabha's critique of both colonialist and national-bourgeois agency as having unconsciously fallen into the trap of modernity.

Bhabha, on the contrary, puts forward a model of postcolonial contramodernity that uses postmodernist and poststructuralist tools to show the failures of logocentric conceptions. I have shown how such a strategy was successful in negotiating the condition of the Third-World intellectual in the First World as well. Bhabha tries to show in his postcolonial theorizations how the idea of an authoritarian West and its assumptions of colonial modernity completely break down in the face of subaltern history, and the more complicated problems of expatriation and diasporic conditions.

I have noticed in this chapter how Bhabha gradually moves into the very complex problematic of the moment of enunciation—where all representation is always/already contingent and differential. Bhabha's chief purpose in trying to theorize an enunciative moment is to provide the 'other' with a chance for the articulation of his/her culture and politics. But this is achieved through a very complex postmodern dynamic. The moment of enunciation is a disjunctive moment, multi-accentual and heterogeneous, that initiates a movement beyond discipline or history. It is this contingency of the constitution of the self that Bhabha seizes upon to celebrate an absence of closure, and move towards an indeterministic, postmodern heterogeneity. I have discussed how this is a complex but very effective strategy of representation or non-representation not only of the marginal subject, but also that of the Third-World intellectual in the First World.

Towards Postfoundationalism

I end my book with a rather longish discussion on the tradition of foundational historiography and its implications. I have tried to show, through a study of the writings of historians like Gyan Prakash and Gyanendra Pandey, how there was a failure of agential thrust and an inability to move out of the narratives of power in the practise of foundational historiography. Gyan Prakash, for example, has argued how the counter-theorizations of nationalism or Marxism or anthropology/area-studies were methods of counter-politics that could be easily essentialized by Western hegemony.

Prakash charts a trajectory of the development of Indian historiography from nationalism, through area-studies, to Marxism and shows how the entire logic of writing history is foundational in nature, and cannot extricate itself from the vicious trope of essentialist colonial modernity.

Having looked into the dynamics of this entire development of historiography in India (and most of the rest of the world), I conclude that there needs to be a re-thinking of the approach to historiography in the entire Third World. What I have felt is that a post-foundational approach would perhaps be the right way of trying to negotiate the politics of identity for the Third World and this is precisely what people like Bhabha and Spivak are doing from their location in the First World. To negotiate their identity (and, by default, the identity of the Third World), they have adopted postmodern techniques through intricate methodological manoeuvres. Their works have indeed opened up newer theoretical spaces, where even such canonical distinctions as the Third World and the First World need to be revised and re-thought. It cannot be definitively said whether their project will meet with success in the long run, in terms of the politics of representation or representability, but this movement beyond closure is definitely a commendable methodological achievement for the Third-World intellectual in the First World. Edward Said died while I was working on this thesis. I earnestly hope that the other two, with able help from some of their colleagues (for example, Gauri Viswanathan), will continue their run of success.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

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CHAPTER ONE

REPRESENTATION AND AGENCY: LOCATING THE INTELLECTUAL

The Intellectual in Perspective

To put it simply, the signing of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 divided the world in three.¹ This, along with the Cold War, saw the emergence of three worlds, each with its own set of economic, political and sociological reference frames.² These frames of reference have interacted internally and externally to create a network, a set of equations that have governed the behaviour of a state in the years that followed the Second World War. The fall of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War in the nineties of the last century, have once again re-arranged the patterns of political and social discourse throughout the world. The emergence of the United States almost as the lone super-power has had its own implications in terms of the politics of culture and representation. All these, in short, have opened up the socio-political debate about representation and negotiation towards multiple possibilities, and ruptured the very notion of a centre that creates and nurtures the idea of a stable and resolute subject-position.

The role of the intellectual has been of representative significance vis-à-vis the international dimension of this behavioural dynamic. The absorption of intellectuals into

these by and large political interactions between states has resulted in an interesting presence of rational, thinking individuals in a game of domination and intimidation, coercion and subjugation. What many of these intellectuals have done is to try and promote a particular brand of philosophy or 'knowledge' which the state uses to justify its political interests.

The continuous tension among different schools of knowledge, among asymmetric patterns of writing history, has successfully deflated the concept of an organic truth or a fixed pattern of historical development that had been promoted all this while by the pervasive logic of liberal humanism. We are now familiar with the terms 'knowledges' and 'histories', with their very own connotations of pluralism. Each one of these sets of 'knowledges' or 'histories' qualifies the other and tries to establish a discursive dominance that goes towards the repudiation of a particularly qualified 'truth'. Thus inevitably, there are as many 'truths' as there are 'histories' or 'knowledges', each equally valid (or, at least, claiming to be so), and each claiming constitutional validity within its framework of influence and domination.

This is, of course, not to say that the intellectual has always worked towards the validation of a state-promoted philosophy. Intellectuals over the world have also consciously played the oppositional role—of trying to undercut state domination, wage resolute battles against intimidation and coercion, sometimes at the cost of their

independence and even, in extreme cases, their lives. I shall come back to this soon, but the point I am trying to make is that by the middle of the last century universal ideals such as 'truth' and/or 'knowledge' had become minutely localized and acquired limited and agenda-based constituency. Robert Young makes this point well while discussing Edward Said's book *Orientalism*:

...all knowledge may be contaminated, implicated even in its very formal or 'objective' structures. To the extent that all knowledge is produced within institutions of various sorts, there is always a determined relation to the state and to its political practices at home and abroad.³

Thus the intellectual inevitably has to play a difficult game of balancing self and state, of trying to work out a space for oneself that might be located beyond the state and its political practices. This space, however, is intensely political, and not the kind of space that someone like Julien Benda has imagined for the intellectual.⁴ Benda imagines the intellectual to inhabit a universal, neutral space that exists beyond national boundaries and is not qualified by ethnic identity. It is interesting to notice, however, that of all those that Benda considers to be intellectuals (namely, Spinoza, Voltaire, Ernest Renan et al), Jesus is the only non-European who gets his approval. Benda was writing in the twenties of the last century, and by the time we got to read him in English, things had changed a great deal. The politics of the world around us had ceased to be one of binary opposition

between the 'West' and the 'rest', and issues of representation had acquired multiple polarities that could not possibly have been imagined by Benda. As Edward Said says in his Reith Lectures:

Things have changed a great deal since then [the time when Benda was writing *The Treason of the Intellectuals*]. In the first place, Europe and the West are no longer the unchallenged standard-setters for the rest of the world. The dismantling of the great colonial empires after World War Two diminished Europe's capacity for intellectually and politically irradiating what used to be called the dark places of the earth.⁵

He emphasized how the advent of the Cold War and the emergence of the Third World, along with the formation of the United Nations, changed equations around the globe. Non-Europe began to get the importance it deserved and their traditions (intellectual or otherwise) were regarded worthy of serious attention. Thus, there had already been a perspectival shift in the latter half of the twentieth century in terms of the decentring of power distributions across the world. It was thus imperative that one started to address the steadily growing presence of intellectuals from the Third World, who were already making their presence felt in the larger issues of distribution of power across both the political and the theoretical milieu alike. What was considered the prerogative of the Western world, namely discussions, research, production of knowledge for and about human

subjects as such, suddenly involved a presence from the least expected part of the globe—the Third World. The questions of representation and ontology were now opened up for discussions in diverse forums (like the United Nations, for example) that compulsorily involved representatives from the erstwhile colonized parts of the world, and this in a way unsettled the steady and sure progress of First-World humanism and its pervasive assumptions.

Location and Space: Defining the Intellectual

With the increasing importance of the questions of constituency and validity of knowledges and histories, the idea of location has gained in importance. The absence of universals leads inevitably to a scuffle between diverse centres of power for the acquirement of discursive ground. This acquirement depends on the ability of the particular centre of power in the creation and disbursal of knowledge/s. The role of the intellectual becomes crucial here. He is the chosen one who would create (or manufacture) systems of thought or knowledges that would consolidate and perpetuate area-based, need-based or issue-based domination.

This is where the *location* of the intellectual or the *space* he inhabits within a state, a culture, or a group becomes of supreme importance. Considering that the idea of an ‘intellectual’ presupposes such qualities as intelligence and discretion, it might be inferred that his/her inclusion in a particular group or coterie is a conscious choice. Coercive techniques of the state might lead the lay citizen, but not the intellectual, to submit to the politics of power. Admittedly

this statement raises many questions such as whether the intellectual needs coercion, or why an intellectual belongs to a certain group or supports a particular method of protest. The location of the intellectual thus has multiple connotations.

First, I would like to focus on the ways in which the intellectual might be defined, and the kind of intellectuals I would be talking about. I have already referred to the way in which people such as Julien Benda like to conceive of the intellectuals as a tiny band of super-gifted and morally superior philosophers, whose words have a vatic, universal appeal. They uphold what might be called eternal standards of truth and justice that are beyond question, let alone subject to discursive qualifications or considerations of agency. Benda considers real intellectuals to be 'those whose activity is essentially not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages, and hence in a certain manner say: "My kingdom is not of this world." ' .⁶ It is evident from Benda's definition of the intellectual that he subscribes to a world-view that is purely humanist in its import. Obviously in the anti-humanist surge of theoretical writings after the Second World War, such an almost sterilised definition of the intellectual would not be able to hold its ground. The intellectual is definitely, or needs to be, more earth-bound in order that he/she successfully battles the continuous attempts at essentialization by various agencies of power that would use him/her for reasons strictly political.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist thinker, however sees the intellectual as a person who is nowhere near Benda's intellectual priest. For Gramsci, the intellectual is a professional who fulfils a particular set of functions in the society. For him a journalist, an academic, a management consultant, a lawyer, a policy expert, a government advisor, a labourer--are all intellectuals who perform their given functions in the society. He is rather impatient with the kind of distinctions generally made between the intellectuals and the non-intellectuals:

All men are intellectuals...When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort. This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist...There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*.⁷

That is to say that for Gramsci any human subject carries on some form of intellectual activity, and participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and thereby brings in new modes of thought. By this he does not mean that each man has a splendidly

original revelation to make, but that each one of them is differentially original in his or her thought and therefore also an intellectual. Although Gramsci's definition of the intellectual is far removed from Benda's, he is also, in a sense, defining the intellectual more philosophically than practically. The specific role, if any, of the intellectual remains hazy and unspecified in his definition.

In the face of this Edward Said's definition of the intellectual seems to be more relevant, considering the kind of politics of representation that we are negotiating here. Said visions a strictly public role for the intellectual, one that is neither transcendental like Benda's, nor the very pedestrian one of the intellectual as professional as envisioned by Gramsci. While Benda's definition is not acceptable to him for obvious reasons of Eurocentricity, Said finds Gramsci's suggestions 'pioneering'. It is due to Gramsci's idea of associating the intellectual with the production and distribution of knowledge (that is to say his 'organic' presence in a particular field of work) that, Said thinks, the intellectual has become a subject of study:

Just put the words 'of' and 'and' next to the word 'intellectuals' and almost immediately an entire library of studies about intellectuals that is quite daunting in its range and minutely focused in its detail rises before our eyes...There has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counter-revolutionary movement without

intellectuals. Intellectuals have been the fathers and mothers of movements, and of course sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces.⁸

But, what Said is concerned about is that in this Gramscian attempt at making intellectuals of all human beings, the intellectual would become only another professional, lost in the maze of information and detail. Instead, Said insists that the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in the society, whose function cannot be easily reduced to faceless professionalism, or somebody who just goes about his business like anybody else. For him, the intellectual had a more representative role, a role that embodied the articulation of a message, or a view, or an attitude, or an opinion or philosophy both to and for a public. The intellectual was more of a conduit between power and the people, someone who would, ideally, act as a conscience of the society around him:

...[He is] someone whose place it is publically to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles...⁹

Said thus emphasizes the public role of the intellectual. It is the intellectual's duty to see to it that those around him get

justice and freedom. The obvious issue of representation is enmeshed with these ideas—of justice and freedom. The state, or the nation, or the other centres of power are incessantly, in their various ways trying to violate the sovereignty of the human subject. It is the duty of the intellectual to talk about this, to make the people aware of these violations of their individual rights and freedom. To assume the role of the public intellectual who addresses the people directly. That is to say, in spite of all barriers the intellectual should visibly represent a standpoint and articulate this representation to his/her public. Said mentions Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre as this kind of intellectuals who have spoken to their people directly, articulated their likes or dislikes publicly, and been very political presences in their respective societies. Most definitely, Said does not want the intellectual to mince words, as he writes:

Least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant.¹⁰

Said has thus charted the trajectory of the intellectual's vocation in no uncertain terms. The purpose of the intellectual's activity, he emphasizes, is 'to advance human freedom and knowledge'.¹¹ I would like to digress a bit here to talk about some of the words that Said uses, and some assumptions that he makes in the course of his defining the intellectual. He talks about 'universal principles', 'human freedom', 'knowledge' as if these are concepts beyond

qualification, those that have transcendental meanings that cannot be problematized. The question is, 'Is he falling into the same essentialist trap like some of his predecessors?' In trying to situate the intellectual as the truest representative of the people is he somewhere playing into the hands of the same Eurocentrism that he consciously tries to resist?

The answer to these questions is not easy. Edward Said belongs to that generation of academics and intellectuals who have grown up on humanist principles of thought and knowledge. Said, for example, has always acknowledged the two great German humanist thinkers Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer as his formative influences. At the same time, however, Said is also keenly aware of the essentialist assumptions that intellectuals like Julien Benda are succumbing to. With the publication of his hugely influential book *Orientalism* in 1978, it was Said who first problematized the politics of representation on such a large scale.¹² He realized the need for deconstructing myths, for deflating pre-conceived notions about the superiority of the West or the inferiority of the East, and most of all the veritable need for a counter-discourse that would challenge the pervasive assumptions of the West. But he could not, in the same breath, disown his humanist training, the solid foundations of the study of the humanities that formed the core of the intellectual in him.

In a way, therefore, Said can be seen as located somewhere in between the liberal humanist tendencies of old school academic thinking on the one hand, and the open-

ended postmodernism of the present. His work could be seen as a kind of a bridge, a middle path between the two extremes. However, Said does not seem to align fully with any one of these tendencies in his definition of the intellectual. While he has expressed his qualified disapproval of the image of the transcendental intellectual as envisioned by Julien Benda, or the extra-liberal Gramscian image of the 'everyman' intellectual, he does not seem to be very comfortable with postmodern versions of either the role or the function of the intellectual. For him, somewhere, there is the need for grand narratives, for the solid, unerring presence of 'truth' or 'freedom' as still centres or reference points:

According to this [postmodern] view grand narratives have been replaced by local situations and language games; postmodern intellectuals now prize competence, not universal values like truth or freedom. I have always thought that Lyotard and his followers are admitting their own lazy incapacities, perhaps even indifference, rather than a correct assessment of what remains for the intellectual a truly vast array of opportunities despite postmodernism.¹³

This, Said infers, is because of the fact that governments across the globe still oppress their people; there are grave miscarriages of justice virtually in every part of the world; and, most of all, there is rampant co-optation of intellectuals by governments, multinational agencies and centres of power throughout the world. The ambivalence of postmodernism cannot effectively cope with these very basic problematics of

the public role of the intellectual, one who directly addresses the problem of a people willingly and in public.

I shall discuss these aspects of Said's work in the chapters that follow. For the purpose of this book I have taken the role of the intellectual to mean the very political nature of his/her involvement with the world around. Therefore I shall rarely use the word 'intellectual' in the Gramscian sense, to mean the scientist, or the artist, or even the theorist involved in his/her objective pursuit of knowledge. The intellectual for me is essentially a political being, one who tries to uncover representational anxieties, and talks about the ontological and the political in the same breath. In this I tend to agree with the American sociologist C. Wright Mills when he writes:

...it is in politics that intellectual solidarity and effort must be centred. If the thinker does not relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle, he cannot responsibly cope with the whole of live experience.¹⁴

I shall ignore the humanist assumption embedded in the word 'truth' for the time being and come back to it at a more opportune moment. I agree with the basic thrust of the argument about the political role of the intellectual. And I do not completely agree with Said's scepticism about the postmodern intellectual's commitment to the idea of justice. In his arbitrary and contingent manner the postmodern intellectual also aptly addresses the problems of representation and location, and hence I include him in all

eagerness within the ambit of the political role of the intellectual.

The Study of History and the Problem of Representation

One of the chief debates concerning the problem of representation has revolved around the development of certain academic disciplines, and the varied ways in which they have operated discursively to marginalize certain groups, or peoples, or voices. The most talked about discipline in this context has been that of history. The debate about historiographical elisions has raged throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, and intellectuals around the world have actively participated in this.

As a preamble to the multiple connotations of location and representation it might thus be useful to look at the study of the growth and development of the discipline of history. With the deflation of the concept of a universal Truth, historical thought has opened itself up to multiplicities, sets of perspectives within which are quantized centres of power—each fighting for hegemonic space and hence canonization. History thus becomes a conglomeration of knowledges that are tentative, and constructed by historians working under all kinds of presuppositions and pressures. The interpretation of ‘truth’ thus becomes inevitably contingent to the dynamics of discursive authority, and hence becomes an open-ended text riding on the whims of myriad centres of power. As Keith Jenkins notes:

...history remains inevitably a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian's perspective as a 'narrator'. Unlike direct memory (itself suspect) history relies on someone else's eyes and voice; we see through an interpreter who stands between past events and our readings of them...the historian's viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them.¹⁵

The American historian Peter Novick discovers in this mad rush for domination an ultimate loss of all sense of historicity. From the point of view of the modernist historian he comments on how from such a dialogic world of conflicting interests historiographic enterprise had gradually evolved into a quagmire of competing claims and counter-claims, all of them wearing down any semblance of agreement by historians as to what objectivity could be, or whether at all such objectivity was achievable. Novick writes:

...as a broad community of discourse, as a community of scholars united by common aims, common standards, and common purposes, the discipline of history had ceased to exist...The professor [of history] was as described in the last verse of the Book of Judges: In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.¹⁶

The veiled sarcasm is obvious. Novick refuses to problematize the question of authenticity of the historical document down to the last figleaf. What he is also doing is to completely evade the problematic thrown up by postmodernism about the different and the differential versions of history that are possible. In this context it would be very topical to take a somewhat detailed look at the way Paul Ricoeur problematized the discipline of history in the year 1965, much before postmodernism had really become an abiding fashion in the academia.

History and Theology: Paul Ricoeur and The Logic of Singularity

Paul Ricoeur, in his book *History and Truth*, talks about the process of pluralization of human existence and experience, and the possibilities of innumerable counterpoints that are present within the scope of social habitation. However, he regrets the lack of problematization in the study of history:

And yet we are not dedicated to unity. Our wish is that truth be in the singular, not merely in its formal definition but also in the works of truth. We would like for there to be a total meaning which would be as the meaningful form totalizing all our cultural activity.¹⁷

The search for unity and reason makes it imperative that the exigency for a single truth enters into history. Ricoeur sees this search for a singular truth to be immediately affected with a mark of violence. A singular version of history is marked by a phenomenon of *authority*. Unlike the

postmodernists, however, Ricoeur does not immediately attack the conception of authority as a vicious principle; he rather sees it as an indispensable function within the development of sociological thought:

Authority is not culpable in itself. But yet it is the occasion of the passions of power. It is by means of the passions of power that certain men exercise a unifying function. In this way, violence feigns the highest goal of reason and the most persistent expectation of feeling.¹⁸

The first historical manifestation of this violent unification of the truth, Ricoeur sees, in the authority exercised by theology. A character of authority is always/already present in the foundations of theology. It is a fundamental aspect of the revelation and the truth which the believer confesses. The implicit presence of God's will is a fundamental phenomenon of authority in the religious sphere. This religious authority is treacherous for it believes itself to be serving the truth. Formations of power are thus automatically sutured into the very function of the clergy, and the unitary nature of truth consolidates the authenticity of such a clerical authority. Understandably, this ecclesiastical authority is inevitably marked by violence.

At the end of the triumph of the Renaissance, the stage was set for the transition of the societal order from clerical violence to political violence. Power and authority being the two major signposts of order and rule, the function of the State now was to discover a replacement for the

ecclesiastical authority of God with some kind of political authority. What was imperative was the creation of a unitary formation of power that could be discursively upheld as the authority of a singular truth. Ricoeur writes:

The Church exercised it [power] by means of a doctrine, a doctrine having authority: theology. From the point of view of a sociology of knowledge, this mediating function between the power of the state and the different levels of human research has been adhered to by the philosophy of history for the past century.¹⁹

In order that history may emerge as a replacement for the authority of the Church it becomes necessary for the discipline of history to search for a unity of meanings. The historian of the State intends the emergence of a single truth that will cancel out all contradictions and culminate in a higher synthesis. Obviously, it is here that violence enters the discipline of history. The role of history within a political synthesis thus becomes identical to the role of theology within a clerical synthesis.

Ricoeur discovers a violence in the entire project of the writing of history. Given the dialectical structure of Marxist historiography it could have been possible for it to provide a rational politics which was capable of encompassing both the interests of the proletarians and of the coloured people, and of formulating a long-range world politics. Ricoeur finds the case of Marxism to be 'uncommonly complex for in many respects, it is *the*

philosophy of history *par excellence*'.²⁰ He sees in Marxism's universalism a founding of the history of the proletarian class. The basic pattern of the development of Marxist historiography was to establish the universal and concrete reality that though the proletarian class was oppressed, it would constitute the unity of history in the future. Thus the emergence of any philosophy of history in post-enlightenment times was linked to questions of power and a monopoly of orthodoxy.

Thus, in the sixties of the last century, historians like Paul Ricoeur were trying to problematize the writing of history. History was heterogeneous, many, hydra-headed. No one version of history could ideally be privileged over any other. Ricoeur writes:

The history which we write, retrospective history (*die Historie*) is made possible by the history which is made (*die Geschichte*). If there are several possible interpretations of history, perhaps it is because there are several entangled movements of "historization", if I may use the expression...We carry on several histories simultaneously, in times whose periods, crises, and pauses do not coincide. We enchain, abandon, and resume several histories, much as a chess player who plays several games at once, renewing now with one, now with another.²¹

Thus, Ricoeur was anticipating the movement of historiography into a postmodern problematization, something I am going to talk about in much detail in the later

chapters. The idea of an integral history is a limiting idea. The dialectic of history is basically laid out in longitudinal fibres and latitudinal strands that form a complex network much beyond a simple logic of humanist interpretation. An attempt to look at history, therefore, is to look beyond the unity of the orders of truth. Unity, truth and power are fast friends, and critiquing each one of these formations becomes the central problematic of a theory of representation.

Beyond Singularity: The Breaking Up of History

The movement beyond singularity problematized by Paul Ricoeur was taken up with a lot of enthusiasm by the later practitioners of historiography. The discipline of history – both practice and theory—was opened up in the later years of the last century into a complex heterogeneity, which addressed the problem of representation from newer and more complex perspectives. There were obvious objectives and advantages of such enterprise. Once attempts at theorising historiography were initiated, the puritan homogeneity of a canonical discipline was immediately unsettled. Not only were there significant changes in the conventional patterns of studying history, but theories of the subaltern and the marginal cropped up as consistent attempts to undercut the implicit domination of Western epistemology and ontology. The New Historicist search for co-texts rather than contexts was symptomatic of a magnification of the historiographic enterprise, to analyse history as text, to undercut the difference between history and fiction.

The meteoric rise of postmodernism marked this rupture in Western epistemological thought with a finality. Postmodernism came to signify the awareness of European culture, that it was no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world. Derrida's theory of deconstruction involved the decentralisation and decolonisation of European thought. He tried to resist, through his writings 'a certain fundamental Europeanization of world culture'.²² What culminated in the writings of Derrida or Foucault was perhaps initiated by Arnold Toynbee, who used the term 'postmodern', for the first time.²³ In *A Study of History* Toynbee talks about how from the 1870s onwards Western historiography was beginning to come to terms with its loss of supremacy and an acceptance of cultural globalization accompanied by a re-empowerment of the non-Western states. Although Toynbee did not assume that the West was in decline, he realised that history had created 'a distorting egocentric illusion to which the children of a Western Civilisation had succumbed like the children of all other known civilisations and known primitive societies'.²⁴ Thus, the conception of postmodernism is accompanied by a certain self-consciousness about a culture's own historical relativity which leads to the loss of the sense of an absoluteness of any Western account of history.

The Decentering of History

This interesting attempt at relativization of historical thought has significantly enriched the discipline of history. The sudden breakdown of Western discursivity has created

multiple centres of power which continuously debate the possibilities of interpretation, and become cultural policemen that try to undercut forms of hegemony. The exhilarating heterogeneity into which the discipline of history has been broken up has led to contingent clashes between civilisations and arbitrary aporetic formations that question the disciplines of knowledge and power.

It is interesting to note in passing that such opening up of history towards theory was consistently opposed by the closed dialectic structure of Marxism itself. The Existential Marxist humanism of Jean-Paul Sartre attempted a totalizing of the concept of 'history' as an objective discipline out of the dialectical structure of theoretical Marxism. The primacy of history above all else was asserted within a Marxist discourse, together with an accompanying defence of humanism, primarily under the influence of a Marxism of a Sartrean existentialist form. Sartre argued a return-to-history format when he insisted that 'both sociology and economism must be dissolved in *History*'.²⁵ The Stalinist regime subverted these theoretical concepts and initiated the rise of post-Marxist philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault or Jean-Francois Lyotard. These historians, writes Robert Young, 'rejected not the dialectic as such, nor history, but the closed dialectic as an autonomous principle that was supposed to produce the grand narrative of History...Instead, Merleau-Ponty proposed an open dialectic which would concede Marxism's equivocalness, and give up the claim to the dialectical logic of History as a process of objective truth'.²⁶

Such post-Marxist attempts were developed later on by Louis Althusser. In his treatment of history Althusser has systematically and consistently tried to undercut the continuous and homogeneous spatio-temporality of both the Hegelian and the Sartrean conceptions of history. He finds in history a certain type of complexity, the unity of a structured whole that contains instances which are distinct and relatively autonomous. These autonomous and distinct pockets of history coexist within a complex structural unity of the discipline of history. This unity is contingent and ruptured, and is not to be confused with the autonomous, self-contained, discursive unity that Ricoeur talks about. Each mode of production of history in the Althusserian schema is made up of differentiated histories. These differentiated histories form a specific historical totality, for each history operates within the general totality of the mode of production. Consequently, many totalities are created, differential and contingent, and none of them has a necessary discursive transcendence that makes it superior to the others. The decentred nature of historicity that Althusser talks about is dislocated, uneven and without a single ideological base time. The presence of one history presupposes the absence of another, and the simultaneous coexistence of the 'presence' along with the corresponding absences creates the effect of decenterity. Althusser was thus anticipating the logic of postmodernism as he argued that there can be no history in general, only specific structures of historicity. Robert Young writes:

Althusser...suggests that history can only be thought through as a permanent contradiction: it is a totality, but that totality is a decentred structure in dominance in which each history's history is defined not through its identity with, or difference from, a general history but by being differentiated from every other history, on which it is necessarily also therefore dependent, in a kind of negative totalization...Another way of putting this would be to say that Althusser demonstrated that according to the protocols of conventional logic, history is impossible.²⁷

Thus, the discipline of history was already split into many discursive centres, even before the ideas of postmodernism had properly set in. The location of Third-World intellectuals in the First World is thus a many layered problematic that is underscored by the problem of history. The works of all the three intellectuals I write about here—Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha—share alike a distrust of simple historicisms. The scepticism towards historicist grand narratives leads to a rejection of these, in favour of a multiplicity of heterogeneous, conflicting and incommensurable histories. The postcolonial conception of history that is evident in the works of these three (particularly, Spivak and Bhabha) matches Althusser's concept of history as explicated by Derrida:

Althusser's entire, and necessary, critique of the 'Hegelian' concept of history and of the notion of an expressive totality, etc., aims at showing that there is

not one single history, a general history, but rather histories *different* in their type, rhythm, mode of inscription—intervallic, differentiated histories. I have always subscribed to this.²⁸

The Problem of 'Location'

The location of the intellectual within any such dynamic of the creation or dispersal of knowledge and historicity is thus inevitably and automatically qualified. Locations on the basis of political preference ramify into cultural and geographical locations that give birth to a multi-layered frame of reference, replete with ideological and often reflexive significance. The concepts of 'positionality' or 'representation' are themselves problematic and need inevitable qualifications. Let us say, for example, the Third-World intellectual in the First World, or the black American woman trying to be heard in the circuit of sophisticated First-World academia: these are complex positions to negotiate in a world where equations of power (political, geographical, cultural etc.) are differentially related to each other and challenge ideological formations continuously by resorting to a postmodern logic of epistemological fragility. Each one of the qualifications used in my examples above, namely, 'Third World', 'intellectual', 'First World', 'black', 'American', 'woman' has its own set of representational signposts which challenges its differential/s.

There are obvious problems of such representational signposts though. Such complex qualifications of being or belonging automatically negate the independence of the

intellectual. He/she becomes enmeshed in this web of representational metaphors that are continuously trying to locate him/her within particular schools of thought or modes of historicity. In other words we might even assert that until and unless we have located the intellectual safely within a tidy and manageable historical frame we are not comfortable with his/her presence. Our conception of knowledge has become myopic in the sense that, the relative independence of an intellectual causes discomfiture and a consequent failure to understand his/her work. Teaming up becomes essential for the intellectual to be heard, and once the intellectual is successful in locating himself/herself within a particular coterie, we appropriate his/her work to search for sensational ripples within it. Location thus remains a problem for the intellectual, no matter how differentially he/she tries to pinpoint his/her co-ordinates. This is why, perhaps, such umbrella terms as the Third-World intellectual and the First-World intellectual have to be used, no matter how diverse or different the intellectuals we are talking about are. Thus, in spite of the perfect awareness of the differences between the works and the points of view of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha—I have had to club them together under the sub-heading of Third-World intellectuals. Let me try, in the next few pages, to problematize this part of the debate.

The Third World and History

The idea of location is closely linked to the central thematic of my argument. I talk about the Third-World intellectual in

the First World, and the three intellectuals I deal with are deeply enmeshed in the problem of location and representation. Each one of these ideas of location and representation is linked to the problem of history or the evolution of historiography—and hence there is a need to map the general trajectory of the development of the discipline of history in the Third World. It would not be an overstatement to suggest that the politics of representation is directly and explicitly influenced by the notion of history and the development of historiography in a particular tradition. Since two of the intellectuals I am talking about here (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha) from India, and the other (Edward Said) has sporadically shown a keen interest in the development of Indian historiography, I would take up the development of the discipline of history in India as a case in point.

Historiography in India: A Case in Point

To start off, it is better to clarify that the study of history in India has taken a very different turn from the early 80s of the last century. It will not be an overstatement to suggest that in the wake of the Subaltern School of historians there has been almost a kind of paradigm shift in the development of historiography in India.²⁹ We can emphatically say today that Indian history has been successfully problematized, and recent attempts at reconstruction of a better theorized historiography have been more or less successful. That this has been possible is not only due to the interventionist attempts of the historians of the Subaltern School, but also

because of postmodern theoretical interventions of the likes of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Gyanendra Pandey, Gyan Prakash and certain others.³⁰ I shall discuss these attempts at theorizations of contemporary Indian historiography in greater detail in the final chapter of my thesis. As of now, I would like to concentrate on the practice of post-colonial historiography in India.

Whose History is India Writing?

In one of his essays, the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty makes a very incisive remark about the practice of history writing in post-colonial India. He writes:

...in so far as the academic discourse of history—that is, ‘history’ as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—is concerned, ‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Kenyan’, and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’. In this sense, ‘Indian’ history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.³¹

That is to say, the master narrative of Indian history has always been qualified by a pervasive Eurocentrism, and the Indian historians have a ‘hyperreal’ Europe in their imagination to which they incessantly and automatically go back to for ideological and structural reinforcements.³²

The development of the discipline of history in post-colonial India, be it nationalist or Marxist, has minutely followed the set paradigms of Western modernity. The liberal-humanist mode of writing history has generally followed a narrative of transition, and most Third-World histories have been written in accordance with the transition narrative followed in the West. Sumit Sarkar, the Marxist historian for example, traces the development of Indian historiography within a pattern of three absences:

So many of the aspirations aroused in the course of the national struggle remained unfulfilled—the Gandhian dream of the peasant coming into his own in *Ram-rajya*, as much as the left ideals of social revolution. And as the history of independent India and Pakistan (and Bangladesh) was repeatedly to reveal, even the problems of a complete bourgeois transformation and successful capitalist development were not fully solved by the transfer of power of 1947.³³

Sarkar also sees the trajectory of the development of modern Indian history as a transition that remains ‘grievously incomplete’. At the very beginning of his book *Modern India* he writes:

The sixty years or so that lie between the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and the achievement of independence in August 1947 witnessed perhaps the greatest transition in our country’s long history. A transition, however, which

in many ways remains grievously incomplete, and it is with this central ambiguity that it seems most convenient to begin our survey.³⁴

That is to say, the pattern of historical thinking in India has generally followed a model laid down by colonial modernity. And within this narrative that vacillated between the imperialist, the nationalist, and the Marxist imaginations, the 'Indian' always remained a figure of lack or failure. Dipesh Chakrabarty finds a 'double bind' in the articulation of the subject of 'Indian' history. In a very interesting argument he unfolds how India is both the *subject* and the *object* of modernity. What one assumes as *one* India, or the Indian people, is always/already split into a 'modernizing' elite, and a 'yet-to-be-modernized' peasantry, and even such a split is, in reality, a simplistic one:

As such a split subject, however, it speaks from within a metanarrative that celebrates the nation state; and of this metanarrative the theoretical subject can only be a hyperreal 'Europe', a 'Europe' constructed by the tales that both imperialism and nationalism have told the colonized.³⁵

Thus the reconciliation between class identities on the one hand, and a 'European' notion of a unified nation-state on the other, remains perpetually irresolute and hanging in the balance. The notion of 'India', therefore, remained in the hand of her historians a half-formed narrative, in perpetual transition, which was modelled on what Chakrabarty calls a 'hyperreal Europe', yet never reaching a shapely fruition.

This is why, Sumit Sarkar, in spite of discovering at least three possible narrative trajectories that Indian historiography might have followed, ultimately concludes that the project of writing 'India' has remained 'grievously incomplete'.

However, in spite of this realization about the apparent lack of completeness inherent in the ideological formation of India, there was no immediate way out. The arbitrary and contingent formations of postmodernism had not yet made their way into the very conservative nature of the growth of Indian historiography. India was still in search of a selfhood that could go beyond the categorical binaries of the West and the non-West, the white and the non-white, and other such tropes which had strong foundations within the very ideas of colonization and imperialism. The inchoate ambiguity of a postmodern ethic was too much to ask for, even in the 1980s, from the practitioners of Indian history. What could however be expected was the refusal on the part of the indigenous historiographers to play the game of binaries that was only helping the re-establishment of a post-independence hegemony.

Searching for a Self-Image: Decolonizing Indian History

Ashis Nandy, for example, tries to formulate an Indian self-image that would go beyond an essential Western construction. What the discursive impact of colonialism had successfully done was not only to ingrain the idea of the nation-state as the only possible movement towards modernity for India, but also create ethnic stereotypes who

would sustain the legacy of colonialism within the construction of their history. That is to say, not only was the creation of stereotypes true in terms of the conception of the general mass of the Indian people, it also held good for thinkers and intellectuals, who would write nationalist, or Marxist, or ethnicist histories about India and her people. Nandy does not hide his exasperation when he talks about this:

India is not non-West; it is India. Outside the small section of Indians who were once exposed to the full thrust of colonialism and are now heirs to the colonial memory, the ordinary Indian has no reason to see himself as a counterplayer or an antithesis of the Western man. The imposed burden to be perfectly non-Western only constricts his, the everyday Indian's, cultural self, just as the older burden of being perfectly Western once narrowed—and still sometimes narrows—his choices in the matter of his and his society's future...The pressure to be the obverse of the West distorts the traditional priorities of the Indian's total view of man and universe and destroys his culture's unique gestalt. It in fact binds him even more irrevocably to the West.³⁶

What Nandy wishes to achieve through this argument is to come out of the entire trap of modernity laid down by the West. He wants to concentrate solely on the predicament of India, the notional trope of being 'Indian' and writing the history of an India 'which is neither pre-modern nor anti-

modern but only non-modern'.³⁷ This non-modern India, he says, can successfully survive the Western onslaught; it would co-exist with the India of the modernists who think they have imitated the best of the Western man, and turn out to be pathetic copies of the Sahib.³⁸ But this non-modern India would summarily reject most versions of Indian nationalism 'as bound irrevocably to the West—in reaction, jealousy, hatred, fear and counterphobia'.³⁹

For the time being Nandy's argument seemed to be the best option to move out of hegemonic formations of colonial modernity. To stand out of the idea of modernity was not only to reject the game of binaries that would perpetuate the trappings of power, but also throw up possibilities of moving towards the formation of an independent subjecthood that is neither Western nor Indian, but something in between. In some of his essays Homi Bhabha also toys with this idea of a contingent subjecthood, and I shall discuss these in detail in my chapter on Bhabha.⁴⁰ There is an implicit paradox in Nandy's argument, which does not remain unnoticed:

The absolute rejection of the West is also the rejection of the basic configuration of the Indian traditions; though, paradoxically, the acceptance of that configuration may involve a qualified rejection of the West.⁴¹

He calls this 'ethnic universalism' of non-modern India.⁴² So, this idea of non-modern India not only rejects the pervasive Eurocentrism of Indian historical thinking, but

also, in a way, does away with a traditional idea of 'Indianness' (which is also a construct based on false consciousness). Nandy is thus surreptitiously moving into the logic of postmodernism, by rejecting the possibility of any unilateral formation of subjecthood or political positionality. In fact, we will see how, towards the end of his essay Dipesh Chakrabarty is also moving towards an argument that is not very different from Nandy's. He argues that both European imperialism and Third-World nationalism have worked in collusion to promote the nation-state as the most desirable form of political economy. The discourses of both the disciplines of economics and history have celebrated the rise of the nation-state and a capitalist mode of production narrative:

Since these themes will always take us back to the universalist propositions of 'modern' (European) political philosophy—even the 'practical' science of economics that now seems 'natural' to our constructions of world systems is (theoretically) rooted in the ideas of ethics in eighteenth-century Europe—a third-world historian is condemned to knowing 'Europe' as the original home of the 'modern', whereas the 'European' historian does not share a comparable predicament with regard in the pasts of the majority of humankind.⁴³

In the face of this Chakrabarty posits his project of 'provincializing Europe'. It is not, he insists, a simplistic rejection of 'modernity, liberal values, universals, science,

reason, grand narratives, totalizing explanations, and so on'.⁴⁴ But it is an interventionist project of writing history that is heterogeneous and plural and actively resists the coercive (sometimes) totalizations of the tropes of European modernity.

Dipesh Chakrabarty is categorical about how this project of provincializing Europe cannot be a project of 'cultural relativism'.⁴⁵ The idea of cultural relativism presupposes the centrality of European culture and consolidates the idea that reason, science, rationalism have their culture-specific origins within European enlightenment. Chakrabarty's project also sets out to prove that Europe's acquisition of the adjective *modern* for itself not only consolidated the project of imperialism, but was, in its turn, helped on by Third-World nationalisms whose celebration of colonial modernity was undeniably self-reflexive. His critique of nationalism is interestingly complex:

I do not mean to overlook the anti-imperial moments in the careers of these nationalisms; I only underscore the point that the project of provincializing 'Europe' cannot be a nationalist, nativist, or atavistic project. In unravelling the necessary entanglements of history—a disciplined and institutionally regulated form of collective memory—with the grand narratives of 'rights', 'citizenship', the nation state, 'public' and 'private' spheres, one cannot but problematize 'India' at the same time as one dismantles 'Europe'.⁴⁶

Chakrabarty's intention is thus to problematize the project of European modernity along with those of nationalism that were collusive in the perpetuation of Western hegemonic formations. He tries to knit into the history of modernity all those tropes that have been ignored in its steady march of progress—those of contradiction, ambivalence, coercion and irony. The victory of modernity, in other words, is not unilateral or homogeneous. It is replete with strategies of power and suppression and foundational violence. He writes how it is impossible to provincialize Europe within the institutional mores of the university system, and all such attempts will inevitably pull the trajectory back to the idea of 'hyperreal Europe':

...the project of provincializing Europe must realize within itself its own impossibility. It therefore looks to a history that embodies this politics of despair.⁴⁷

Thus, if I may say so, Chakrabarty's project chalks out the failure of history as a discipline. This failure, however, is not the end of history, but a movement towards more contingent disciplinary formations, where each would question the other, in a state of perpetual flux. Thus, though Chakrabarty does not intend to talk about 'postmodernism' in so many words, he already indicates the need for a post-'modern' historiography which would enable India to write its own history, overcoming the abiding presence of a hyperreal 'Europe'. The question of space or location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World is thus intricately linked with the question of history. One of the primary tropes that

he/she has to grapple with is this one of representation—and representation is linked intrinsically with the question of history or historiography. History and the formations of historiography thus remain one of the primary thrust areas in this book, and I shall consistently bring up this question of history and its implications for the postcolonial intellectual.

The Third-World Intellectual in the First-World Workplace

The problem of representation and/or representability is something that the Third-World intellectual carries with him/her as a baggage when he/she enters the First-World academy. Questions about history, his/her colonial positionality, or strategic postcolonial manoeuvres are carried along with the intellectual to his/her new location. Placed within such a hybrid and ambivalent reference frame it becomes difficult for the Third-World intellectual to have a solid foundational base, in terms of a theoretical or historical discourse that would launch him/her suitably into an academia that is replete with multiple heavyweight centres of domination and discursivity. Thus the problem of location is multiplied when the native intellectual reaches the highly competitive (and sometimes even coercive) First-World academy that becomes his or her place of work. Readjustments are inevitable, as the intellectual needs to be able to conform (or at least not to blatantly contradict) to the various policy decisions that go into the making of a department. The politics of knowledge is closely attuned to the political economy, and formations of epistemic systems

are more often than not dependant on interest groups that might include corporations, the private sector, the economic practice of the state, and so forth.

The newly arrived intellectual from the Third World has to step inside with utmost care. It is his/her merit that has primarily been responsible for situating this person where he/she is. Merit, in most cases, breeds independence and it is his/her relative independence in terms of a politics or a subject-position that must be uppermost in his/her mind, when he/she ventures into academic research. How does this Third-World intellectual now deal with the various silent coercive forces that might force him/her to submit to policy? It would be relevant to note at some length Aijaz Ahmad's comment on this:

The liberal pluralistic self-image of the university can always be pressed to make room for diversity, multiculturalism, non-Europe; careers can arise out of such renegotiations of the cultural compact. But this same liberal university is usually, for the non-white students, a place of desolation, even panic; exclusions are sometimes blatant, more often only polite and silent, and the documents of one's culture become little sickles to clear one's way through spirals of refined prejudice...Out of these miseries arises a small academic elite which knows it will not return, joins the faculty of this or that metropolitan university, frequents the circuits of conferences and the university presses and develops often with the

greatest degree of personal innocence and missionary zeal, quite considerable stakes in over-valorizing what has already been designated as 'Third World Literature'—and, when fashions change, reconciles this category even with poststructuralism.⁴⁸

Ahmad is literally opening up a debate with multiple angles. First, he talks of the 'liberal, pluralistic self-image' of the Western academy. Walking into the academy from a hybrid, ill-represented and under-nourished Third World, the native intellectual is initially deceived by the metropolitan pluralism and liberal-humanist approach of a healthy and nourished First-World academy. He sees this as the ideal atmosphere for research and theoretical learning and practice. All this is true until he or she steps unconsciously onto the slippery terrain of discursively determined policy decisions. In other words, if the work of this intellectual becomes too politically volatile for the comfort of the academy, Ahmad suggests, the university has means to cut the intellectual down to size. It could be in the form of a freezing of research grants, or a deprivation of due tenureship, which are 'polite' or 'silent' ways of qualifying his or her location; a more 'blatant' way is of course to directly ask the intellectual to leave. It is this situation that can be described as one of 'desolation, even panic'. To be, that is, always at the receiving end of things. I do not suggest, however, that the First-World academic does not face identical situations at the workplace, but only that the Third-World entrant, more often than not without

citizenship, is at a much greater risk, and hence, suffers from a more pervasive sense of panic.

Or, it could be the easier way out—the one that involves no militancy or protest, but a submission into the hands of the policy makers and their politics of qualifying the ‘Other’. The new entrant into the metropolitan academia allows it to essentialize knowledges of the Third World, and use them strictly for purposes of ‘academic’ research. This serves a two-fold purpose: first, this consolidates the much advertised liberal and pluralist image of the First-World university on the one hand; on the other hand, by limiting the strategic practices of the Third World within the confines of a university department, it limits their scope of becoming a large-scale political protest. The non-First-World student has to assimilate his/her theories within the current and existent patterns of academic pursuit to ease entry into, what Ahmad calls, the ‘circuits of conferences and university presses’. Thus, the purpose of the creation of a new and separate identity, a representative status which is not consumed by changing ‘fashions’, is defeated. The sense of security that accompanies the entry into the canonical zone of sophisticated theorizing is overwhelming. What had begun almost as a protest against suppression or trivializing of identity ends up in being lost through the process of assimilation within the same canon that was guilty of denying identity. In other words, as many suggest, the rustle of First-World currency lures the intellectual from the less privileged part of the world into dismissing his protest (sometimes even unwittingly) in exchange of security and a

life of comfortable ease.⁴⁹ The basic idea of the need for theory, mainly the declaration of a separate, rational, representative identity is thus defeated. A whole new debate on agency and political correctness can be initiated at this point, but that is not the concern of this book.

This politics of affiliation and/or disaffiliation complicates the position of the Third-World intellectual. Coercion and lure consequently a huddling together in search of security homogenizes the presence of these intellectuals in the First World. What might thus be lost in the process is the fact that many of these intellectuals—like Said, or Spivak, or Achebe, or Bhabha—might be addressing very different constituencies, or are widely different in their theoretical stand points. The motives of Edward Said in his critique of Israel (and hence the United States) are very different, politically, from Spivak's translations of Mahasweta Devi, which are again removed from Achebe's vitriolic attack on the intentions of Joseph Conrad.⁵⁰ The problem, however, was that in spite of realizing this constitutional heterogeneity they were not, at least in the initial years, successful in establishing their unique subject-positions—the gap between the First and the Third World in terms of power being so obvious. With time, however, many of these intellectuals from the Third World emerged as strongly discursive presences within the First-World academia itself, and became, in their own right, forces to reckon with. I shall come to this discussion in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

Forms of Displacement and the Location of the Intellectual

The problem of representation is layered and contingent upon the different forms of displacement. By 'displacement' I mean to suggest a movement away from one's 'home'—a movement that is qualified by different historical or sociological factors. A movement away from home could be in the form of exile, or immigration, or expatriation, or a mass movement of the refugee. Each one of these movements is qualified by its own set of contingencies, and hence the kind of representational anxiety is different for each of these sets of people. However there are times when they intertwine and overlap making representation a more complex issue to negotiate.

In one of his essays Edward Said clinically differentiates between these different types of movements.⁵¹ The exile is banished from his/her own country, generally as an individual, who lives in another country as an outsider. More often than not the exile is an intellectual who speaks truth to power and hence is driven out of his/her country. The forms of counter-discursivity that this person practises pose a threat to the discursive dominance of the power centre, and hence the government considers it safer to banish this individual from his/her home country. This banishment is a desolate movement away from the familiarity of one's roots, and the exile jealously guards his or her individual identity and, in many cases, refuses to belong to the country

where he or she is banished. Edward Said finds the location and the representation of the exile to be very complex:

Wilfulness, exaggeration, overstatement: these are characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept your vision—which you make more unacceptable because you are in fact unwilling to have it accepted. It is yours, after all.⁵²

He realizes how words like ‘composure’ and ‘serenity’ can rarely be associated with the work of exiles. The exiles are meant to be unpleasant people, and stubbornness is sometimes an intrinsic part of even their best works. I shall come back to this question of the exile and his locational dynamic a little later in this chapter. Another movement away from one’s home is that of the refugee. The refugees are, in a way, a creation of the twentieth century state. The word ‘refugee’ has embedded within it conceptions of a ‘herd’—a large group of people uprooted from their homeland due to political exigencies—and hence, somewhere, the qualifiers of commonality underline the presence of the refugees. But they are distinctly different from the exile, who is a loner, a person of merit and importance, and in most cases an intellectual. The other sharp difference between the exile and the refugee, Darko Suvin suggests, is in the manner of their departure from their respective homelands:

...in fact the conditions of forced displacement differ sharply between exiles—usually able to choose at least the day of departure and afford a ticket on a

cross-border train, ship or plane—and refugees, often tens of thousands or indeed millions of people, uprooted by immediate fear of death and fleeing by whatever improvised means are available.⁵³

The ideas of being and belonging are not uppermost in the minds of the refugees. The primary instinct is that of survival. Born out of this instinct of survival are attempts at physical resistance, a nervously guarded sense of racial and cultural identity (not in the sense of the individual's identity politics, but in terms of collective cultural identity), an exaggerated feeling of 'belonging' to a group from which the slightest deviation would be considered treachery and disloyalty. The location of the refugee could thus be conceived of in the Darwinian sense as an instinct for life and its basic needs for which the refugees huddle together.

Another movement out of the homeland is that of the expatriate. The expatriate voluntarily chooses to live in an alien country, usually for personal and social reasons. The condition of the expatriate is not one of forced migration, but a wilful movement for greener pastures. His condition is the least problematic in terms of inhabiting a physical space, or in terms of socio-economic anxiety. All the three intellectuals from the Third World who I discuss here belong to this group—the expatriate. However, there are moments when Edward Said seems to inhabit a middle space between the exile and the expatriate due to his very active role in the Israel-Palestine conflict over the Gaza strip. The expatriates

sometimes share the solitude and estrangement of the exile
'but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions.'⁵⁴

The only other movement is that of the émigré. The location and definition of the émigré is a little ambiguous because anyone who emigrates to a new country can be termed as an émigré. Of course the movement of the émigré is defined by the consideration of choice.

Problematizing the Exile: The Political and the Fetishized

In the essay 'Displaced Persons' Darko Suvin makes a thought provoking distinction between two kinds of intellectuals—the *critical* intellectuals and the *reproductive* or *distributive* intellectuals. The latter are more like the Gramscian organic intellectuals:

...the engineers of material and human resources; admen and design professionals; the new bishops and cardinals of the media clerisy; most lawyers—in other words, the 'organic' mercenaries, for whom postmodern cynicism dispenses with the need for alibis. Most distributive intellectuals work to reproduce, at one level or another, the means of psychophysical repression. The critical intellectuals, those who produce new forms of consciousness and subconsciousness, are most likely to be alienated from today's regimes, to feel themselves what used to be called 'inner émigrés' or undeclared exiles.⁵⁵

Other than his marked distaste for postmodernism, what is clear from the above lines is his obvious preference for the

critical intellectual. This is the kind of intellectual that Theodore Adorno was, or Julien Benda preferred. The meaning of the word 'exile' thus seems to have multiple connotations in intellectual history. And no wonder, all these connotations are positive in a way such that the exile seems to be an exalted being. This is perhaps the reason why Edward Said very consciously makes the domain of the exile and the expatriate overlap. Indeed there are at times marked similarities between the two and sometimes Said tries to replace the sustained pessimism of the exile with the optimism of the expatriate:

...I speak of exile not as a privilege, but as an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity.⁵⁶

Thus, unlike the expatriate, the condition of the exile is not a matter of choice. What the exile can choose, however, is to act like the expatriate—to explore the discursive possibilities of his subjectivity. Said had realized the one major difference in the conditions of these two groups: 'Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions'.⁵⁷ Said's eagerness to overcome the differences between the exile and the expatriate is thus born out of his energetic activism, his

realization of the potential of the expatriate. He was never an armchair intellectual, and he almost demanded of the exile to use his superior intellect in active political interests. What he perhaps envisioned was a coalition of the exile and the expatriate, in terms of the Third World, so that the struggle for representation was better equipped. The urgency of the expatriate to succeed in alien surroundings could be combined with the austerity and unconquerable will of the exile to create a new idiom of counter-discourse in a different country.

However, Edward Said's eagerness to situate the exile and the expatriate on a level ground needs serious qualifications. No matter how similar their intellectual abilities or their geographical locations (away from 'home') might be, there is one major difference in their respective reference frames—the question of choice. It is in the light of the inability of the exiled intellectual to go home that Said's statement about the expatriates sharing in the feelings of 'solitude' and 'estrangement' of the exile needs to be qualified. However much the expatriate might suffer from alienation and loneliness, the condition of his or her existence in a foreign land cannot be equated with the fateful situation of the exile. The expatriate's loneliness and insecurity are always underlined by the precondition of choice. 'Personal or social reasons', qualifications used by Said himself, may be binding on the individual who makes the choice, but is not such a momentous occasion for history.⁵⁸ It is rather surprising that Said uses the word 'estrangement' for the expatriate. It is too strong and

poignant a term for someone who has willingly migrated to another country, mostly for better career opportunities, or a better lifestyle and can, if he or she so wishes, go back to his or her native country. A very immediate example could be the markedly different situations of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—the expatriate Indian intellectual, and the Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen. While the former frequently visits her hometown in Kolkata, India, the latter, exiled from her homeland, could not even visit her ailing mother in Bangladesh.

Another aspect that needs mention here is that Said is perhaps being too defensive in his empathy for the expatriate. He is generally talking of a selective constituency of Third-World expatriates in the First World, defined implicitly and unerringly, by the continuous fear of rejection and a consequent despondency. But expatriation might also happen the other way round, in which case, the symbiotic equation of the similarity between the exile and the expatriate is immediately defeated. Will a Mark Tully, for example, be defined by the same reference frames of solitude and estrangement?⁵⁹ I daresay that many like Tully have always been showered with extra attention due to the immanent colonial hangover still prevalent in India. They are almost always surrounded by admirers, free to move about the corridors of power, free to migrate whenever they choose, to their respective home countries. Might their condition even remotely be compared with that of the exile, is a question we need to earnestly consider. Before I wind up this discussion on the condition exile, I would like to digress

a bit from the central argument about the location of the Third-World intellectual (the expatriate, to be more precise) in the First World. Comparisons and similarities between the respective conditions of the exile and the expatriate are perhaps inevitable. In this book I intend to discuss the expatriate intellectual in much detail. But before I go back to that discussion, I would like to talk about two examples of exile, in brief, to put the difference between the exile and the expatriate in perspective.

Two Cases in Point

I have already talked about how there must be a distinct locational difference between the exile and the expatriate in spite of the fact that they might inhabit the same geographical or socio-political domain. The pervasive sense of censor and repression accompanies the body politic of the exiled. Surveillance is constant, whereby the subject-position of the exile is perpetually compromised. I would examine, albeit very briefly, the experience of exile of the Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen, and the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti.

Case I: Taslima Nasreen

Taslima Nasreen had to leave her own country Bangladesh in 1994 after her writings infuriated the religious fundamentalists, who declared a death sentence on her. Since then she has been in exile for fourteen years. She was not even allowed to visit her country when her mother, with whom she felt a strong sense of attachment, was on her deathbed. She moved about various cities of Europe till she

was given political asylum in Sweden—a country that eventually gave her citizenship. For an author who wrote only in her mother-tongue, Bengali, she suffered from a deep sense of rootlessness in far away Europe and frantically wanted to speak and express herself in her native language.

After a few years she decided to return to Kolkata, a city close to her country Bangladesh, and a place where she could speak in her own language. The years of her exile were made tolerable in this city till September 2007, when a movement was initiated in West Bengal by Islamic extremists demanding her expulsion from the city. The ‘leftist’ government felt pressurized and after frantic politicking Taslima was shunted off, first to Jaipur in Rajasthan, and then to the capital city, New Delhi. In the capital Taslima was secretly taken to a ‘safe-house’ and put under house-arrest. In a poignant poem, while in house-arrest she wrote:

Today for the one hundred and fiftieth day, the poet
languishes in safe custody
For one hundred and fifty days the poet is unaware
If this earth yet hosts any creature with a human soul
For one hundred and fifty days the poet is unsure
If she is alive or dead.⁶⁰

On 18th November, 2007, while still in house-arrest in New Delhi she wrote of her intense desire to be freed, to roam the streets of the city uninhibited, to be able to move about once again as someone free and devoid of censor:

My world is gradually shrinking. I, who once roamed the streets without a care in the world, am now shackled. Always outspoken, I am now silenced, unable to demonstrate, left without the means of protesting for what I hold dear... I spend my existence surrounded by walls: a prisoner. But I refuse to acknowledge this as my destiny. I still believe that one day I will be able to resume the life I once enjoyed.⁶¹

Eventually, in March 2008, Taslima decided to leave India and returned to Sweden. Since then, she has been shuttling between France, India, and the USA, and all her requests to visit Bangladesh have been turned down by the government.

Case II: Mourid Barghouti

Mourid Barghouti, the Palestinian poet, was forced to leave his homeland in June 1967 when Ramallah, his hometown, fell to the Israeli army. By the time he had completed his education from Cairo University, he was already a much discussed and controversial poet. On the eve of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel, he was refused entry into Palestine, and Egypt did not want to keep him.⁶² He was deported to Hungary, was allowed to live in Budapest, and could not come back to Egypt for almost seventeen years. During most of these seventeen years he had to remain separated from his wife, the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour, and their only son Tamim. It was only after the Oslo Accords that Barghouti was allowed to visit Palestine.⁶³ His return to his 'home' in Deir Ghassanah, near Ramallah, after

thirty long years, is the context of a poignant memoir that touches upon many chords of the life of an exile.⁶⁴

Barghouti's narrative is stark in its frankness, and the shock the reader might feel is necessarily qualified more by the author's experience of exile, and a sense of seething and despondent psychological anxiety at his rootlessness born out of an absence, rather than by the immediate physical consequence of a war between two nations and its political effects. The deliberate method of disruptive intervention through language is Barghouti's way of avenging his personal cause at being thrown out of home by political exigencies that were beyond his control. He takes it out through his exaggerated disgust, and a language that is meant to annihilate all presumptions of a possible peace process initiated by the Oslo agreements. He speaks for his countrymen, but more overwhelmingly he speaks for himself—the assault on his individual autonomy as a Palestinian, and as an intellectual—and this is perhaps the reason behind his almost exaggerated intention of politicising the subject-position of the individual, the marginalized, the exile:

My own defect was that I find it too easy to retreat when I see something I do not like. I turn my back. The days have proved to me that it would have been better if I had put up with a little more and tried a lot more. I marginalized myself in order to put a distance between myself and the slightest hint of cultural or political despotism. The intellectual's despotism is

the same as the despotism of the politicians of both sides, the Authority and the opposition. The leadership of both share the same features. They stay in their positions forever, they are impatient with criticism, they prohibit questioning from any source, and they are absolutely sure that they are always right, always creative, knowledgeable, pleasant, suitable, and deserving, as they are and where they are.⁶⁵

This is the anger of the exile that Said has written about. The anger of the person who is left with no choice, no autonomy of the self, bereft of even the companionship of friends and family. One of the most touching incidents of the memoir is where he touches upon his very private life, his relationship with his son. Politics as the semiotic, at the level of the private is frequently qualified by the one at the level of the personal or the realpolitical, and the exile can never escape the feeling of slipping away from the personal to the private, as he is increasingly torn away or segregated from the familiar registers that qualify meaning. Mourid Barghouti is exiled in Budapest, and his wife and son come to visit him from Egypt. The son does not know the father and thus the personal explodes as the private is born again in this moment of politics:

This boy—born by the Nile in Dr. Sharif Gohar's Hospital in Cairo to an Egyptian mother and a Palestinian father carrying a Jordanian passport—saw nothing of Palestine except its complete absence and

its complete story. When I was deported from Egypt he was five months old; when Radwa brought him with her to meet me in a furnished flat in Budapest he was thirteen months old and called me 'Uncle.' I laugh and try to correct him. "I'm not 'Uncle', Tamim, I'm 'Daddy'." He calls me "Uncle Daddy".⁶⁶

In the sheer immensity of such incidents, the condition of the exile is markedly different from that of the expatriate. For the expatriate, the homeland might be an emotional link, a deep attachment, which might sometimes result in a sense of solitude and estrangement. But for the exile, the separation is a part of the desperation to exist, to hang on the fringes of life or death, to stay alive for a cause that could die with him/her.

I thought it imperative to clarify this difference between the exile and the expatriate for a number of reasons. First, in the pages that follow I shall talk about the expatriate intellectual and not the exile. The presence of the exile and his or her writings is sporadic and contingent. In this book I shall discuss the development of a theory of representation by the Third-World intellectual in the First. I daresay, the sporadic and highly charged contingency of the exile shall not hold good for my purpose. This is of course not to say that the body of work produced by the exile is less serious than the expatriate. On the contrary, there is a paramount historical value in the work of the exile that demands serious research, and perhaps, another whole book. Second, the work of the exile is generally of a very personal (and in many

cases, private) nature, and cannot be considered to be deterministically representative. The expatriate intellectuals who I discuss here, address a substantial constituency of people and their anxieties of location. Third, most of the work produced by exiles is literary—in the forms of stories, or novels, or poetry, or memoirs—and rarely do they venture into theoretical issues which are a major concern in the present book. The three Third-World intellectuals in the First World who I have taken up for discussion, namely Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, have all made significant theoretical contributions to debates about postcoloniality, and the issues of resistance to the hegemonic formations of epistemic systems across the Western world. Even though confined sometimes to their respective academic worlds, they have contributed on a regular basis in the very public sphere of debates and discussions about representing the self, or in problematizing discursive historiography, or regarding questions of negotiating Third-World representation and representability. Fourth, in many discussions on issues of representation the constituencies of the exile and the expatriate are frequently mixed-up or confused. Although there might be indeed many points of contact and referential similarities between the exile and the expatriate, the terms or the people concerned cannot, on any account, be interchanged. In this book I talk about the expatriate intellectual.

The Expatriate Third-World Intellectual and the Question of Honesty

However much there is a difference between the exile and the expatriate in terms of their constitutional location, there are obvious points of contact. These points of contact are sometimes even abstract, linked to the very relativistic questions of honesty and integrity. The attempts to probe into the problems of representation or representability of the Third World are inevitably linked to a principle of honesty on the part of the intellectual. This is the intellectual who has migrated from the Third to the First World, and is now comfortably ensconced in a position of considerable power and prestige within the Western academia. The question of honesty is linked with the problematic of representation. It lies in the extent to which the intellectual is willing to compromise his/her position of institutionalized power, if need be, in order that he/she might defend representational metaphors of the margin (the Third World in this case) against set principles of domination of the West.⁶⁷

This brings us finally to the abiding problematic of placing the intellectual in context. Edward Said divides intellectuals into two groups—the ‘yea-sayers’ and the ‘nay-sayers’. The former always say ‘yes’ to the centre of power and kowtow to its orders, while the latter are ‘individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power and honors are concerned’.⁶⁸ Here Edward Said is giving us another dimension of the exile, whereby it is easier for us (as well as for him) to relate the

expatriate intellectual with the exile. The expatriate Third-World intellectual should, according to Said, assume the role of the nay-sayer. The nay-sayer suffers from a continuous sense of not-at-home-ness, a kind of psychological exile, where society and its structures of power try to unsettle him/her, as he/she finds himself/herself in a state of suspended ambivalence:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, that state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled and unsettling others.⁶⁹

Said talks about Theodor Adorno in this regard, someone he considers to be the dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century. Adorno represents the intellectual as a permanent exile, who is cryptic and mannered in his/her style of writing, and thus cannot be understood immediately. This lack of immediacy serves the intellectual in a two-fold manner: first, it shields him/her from immediate acclaim and thus from the vulnerability of being in public glare; second, he/she demands committed attention from his/her reading public in order that they might realize the import of his/her voice and be sincere in their efforts to understand what he/she tries to convey. Inevitably, such an intellectual is

perpetually at odds with the sectors of power. Their recurrent ability to play the role of the *parrhesiastes* makes the power centre increasingly uncomfortable in their presence.⁷⁰

Set against this *parrhesiastes* or the nay-sayer is the yea-sayer—the organic intellectual I have talked about at the beginning of this chapter. All that is denied to the nay-sayer, in the form of state sponsored privileges and prizes and awards, is consistently showered upon the yea-sayer. He/she is the one who is supposed to be the intellectual face of the government or the state. He/she becomes a strategic part of the system that determines policy. At his/her worst this yea-sayer becomes a salesman for state policy. He/she convinces people, writes essays, organises media support and gradually becomes enmeshed in a coercive corporate system. Almost Faustian, this intellectual barter his/her mind, his/her knowledge, his/her intellect for comfort and power, and most of all security. But Said finds in this sense of security a certain nervousness, a panic of the yea-saying intellectual ‘constrained, by his or her affiliations with universities that pay salaries, political parties that demand loyalty to a party line, think tanks that while they offer freedom to do research perhaps more subtly compromise judgement and restrain the critical voice.’⁷¹ Thus, although this organic intellectual might be vociferous in protesting against any compromise of human rights while speaking in general, or about the fate of nations that have no immediate political bearing on his or her subject-position, his/her silence is awkward yet eloquent when it comes to speaking about what his/her immediate concern should be.

My intention in the following chapters shall be to examine the role of the Third-World intellectual in the First World in the light of the above. If the Third-World intellectual decides to speak up against First-World policy he/she becomes twice removed, at least apparently, from the centre of power: once, as he/she belongs to or represents a less powerful part of the world, and is always/already vulnerable in his/her present location; second, by consistently opposing and unsettling the power centre, he or she cannot befriend the policy-makers, thereby consolidating his or her present, privileged location. By thus refusing to become an organic intellectual he/she transcends the limits of expatriation and almost becomes an exile in the sense in which Adorno was one. Indeed it is difficult to consistently maintain such a position of unilateral opposition. The Third-World intellectual's position of marginality (although he/she might be located in the First World), the hybridity of his/her culture, or the anti-historical pattern of thought that is sometimes inherent within his or her nation's cultural diagram makes this task of opposition or resistance all the more daunting for the Third-World intellectual. As a result, the intellectual has to wade through a very complicated mechanism of influence and counter-influence in order that he/she might take up the problem of representation and address it in the proper perspective. It is my intention, in the following chapters, to find out whether Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha have been successful in addressing this politics of representation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Officially named the *Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance*, the Warsaw Pact was an organization of Communist States in Central and Eastern Europe. It was established on 14th May, 1955, in Warsaw, Poland, and official copies were made in German, Polish, Czech and Russian. This treaty was modelled on the NATO treaty, in that there was a political Consultative Committee, followed by a civilian secretary general, while down the chain of command there was a military commander-in-chief and a combined staff, although the similarities between the two international organizations ended there. This could be seen as the official declaration of the Second World (the Communist Bloc), creating the possibility of the Third World. For a detailed analysis of the implications of the Warsaw Pact see Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (eds.) *A Cardboard Castle: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005); William J. Lewis, *The Warsaw Pact: Arms, Doctrine and Strategy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Vaclav Havel, *To the Castle and Back* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).
2. For an insightful analysis of the Cold War see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
3. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990; rpt. 1993), p.127.

4. See Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, trans. Richard Aldington (London: Norton, 1980).
5. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.19.
6. Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, p.43.
7. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1996; rpt. 2004), p.9.
8. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.8.
9. Ibid., p.9.
10. Ibid., pp.9-10.
11. Ibid., p.13.
12. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New Delhi: Penguin, 2001).
13. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, pp.13-14.
14. C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Ballantine, 1963), p.299.
15. Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991; rpt. 2003), pp.14-15.
16. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.628.

17. Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.175.
18. Ibid., p.176.
19. Ibid., p.183.
20. Ibid., p.183.
21. Ibid., p.186.
22. Jacques Derrida and Christie V. McDonald, 'Choreographies', *Diacritics* 12:2 (1982), p.69.
23. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934-61). Toynbee's early use of the term 'postmodern' is cited by Charles Jencks in *What Is Post-Modernism?* (London: Academy Editions, 1986), p.3. This perspective can also be found in Eric Hobsbawm's works, particularly *The Age of Capital 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985) and *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).
24. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, IX, p.410. For an early critique of Toynbee's positivism, see R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 159-65.
25. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason. I: Theory of Practical Ensembles*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976), p.716.
26. Young, *White Mythologies*, p.27.
27. Young, *White Mythologies*, p.62.

28. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp.57-8. Compare Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970), p.100.
29. The first volume of Subaltern Studies was published in India in 1982. See Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).
30. Some of the essays that have successfully problematized the study of history in India are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, ed. D. Landry and G. Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp.203-36; Homi Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency' in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994; rpt. 2004), pp.245-82; Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, pp.163-90.
31. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; rpt. 2000), p.223.
32. For Chakrabarty's use of the term 'hyperreal' see, *ibid.*, p.223.

33. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.4.
34. Ibid., p.1.
35. Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, p.239.
36. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983; rpt. 2000), p.73.
37. Ibid., p.74.
38. I cannot resist the temptation, here, to quote a few lines from the autobiography of the controversial Bengali writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand Great Anarch!: India, 1921-1952* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987). I presume he fits Nandy's description of the Brown Sahib perfectly. This is a part of the description of Chaudhuri's wedding night by the man himself. It remains a classic example of how cultural colonialism had a pervasive effect on the psyche of the colonized Indian:

I was terribly uneasy at the prospect of meeting as wife a girl who was a complete stranger to me, and when she was brought in...and left standing before me I had nothing to say. I saw only a very shy smile on her face, and timidly she came and sat by my side on the edge of the bed. I do not know how after that both of us drifted to the pillows, to lie down side by side. Then the first words were exchanged. She took

up one of my arms, felt it and said: 'You are so thin. I shall take good care of you.' I did not thank her, and I do not remember that beyond noting the words I even felt touched. The horrible suspense about European music had reawakened in my mind, and I decided to make a clean breast of it at once and look the sacrifice, if it was called for, straight in the face and begin romance on such terms as were offered to me. I asked her timidly after a while: 'Have you listened to any European music?' She shook her head to say 'No.' Nonetheless, I took another chance and this time asked: 'Have you heard the name of an man called Beethoven?' She nodded and signified 'Yes.' I was reassured, but not wholly satisfied. So I asked yet again: 'Can you spell the name?' She said slowly: 'B,E,E,T,H,O,V,E,N.' I felt very encouraged...and [we] dozed off. (pp.350-51).

39. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, p.74.

40. Most of all, I am reminded of the essay, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.121-31.

41. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, p.75.

42. Ibid., p.75.

43. Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, p.240.

44. Ibid., p.241.
45. Bhabha was also critical of the ideas of cultural relativism and cultural diversity, both of which he saw as strategies of consolidating a pervasive Eurocentrism. Instead he promulgated the idea of cultural difference in his writings. See Bhabha, 'Articulating the Archaic: Cultural Difference and Colonial Nonsense' and 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation' in *The Location of Culture*, pp.175-98 and pp.199-244.
46. Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, p.242.
47. Ibid., p.243.
48. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Languages of Class, Ideologies of Immigration' in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992; rpt 2001), pp.84-5.
49. See Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, pp.294-321.
50. The intentions and issues of these intellectuals were various and belonged to very different constituencies. While Said was directly rallying for the cause of Palestine, Spivak's translation had more to do with the representative status of the subaltern Third-World woman, while Achebe was directly addressing the issue of racism from the perspective

of the Black man. See Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1980); Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Routledge, 1995) and (Calcutta: Thema, 1995); Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' in Robert Kimbrough, ed., *Heart of Darkness, An Authoritative Text, Background and Sources, Criticism. 3rd ed.* (London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988), pp.251-61.

51. See Edward W. Said, 'Reflections on Exile' in *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2001), pp.173-86.
52. Ibid., p.182.
53. Darko Suvin, 'Displaced Persons' in *New Left Review* 31 (Jan-Feb 2005), p.111.
54. Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p.181.
55. Suvin, 'Displaced Persons', pp.107-8.
56. Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p.184.
57. Ibid., p.181.
58. Ibid., p.181.
59. Sir Mark Tully (born 24 October 1935 in Calcutta, India) was the Chief of Bureau, BBC, New Delhi for 22 years. Schooled in England, he stayed mostly in India covering all major incidents in South Asia during his tenure. He was made an Officer of The Order of the British Empire in 1985 and was awarded the Padma Shree (a high civilian honour in

India) in 1992, a rare exception for a non-Indian. He was knighted in the 2002 New Year Honours. In 2005 he received the Padma Bhushan (another high civilian honour in India).

60. Taslima Nasreen, *Was a poet ever kept in house arrest?*, trans. Faizul Latif Chowdhury, in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taslima_Nasrin.
61. Taslima Nasreen, *Banished Within and Without* in <http://taslimanasrin.com/index2.html>.
62. On November 19, 1977, Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to officially visit Israel when he met with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and spoke before the Knesset in Jerusalem about his views on how to achieve comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which included the full implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. This was considered by the entire Arab world to be a serious blow to Arab nationalism.
63. The Oslo Accords, finalised on August 20, 1993, officially called the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP) was a milestone in Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was the first direct, face-to-face agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It was the first time that the Palestinians publicly acknowledged Israel's right to exist.
64. Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans., Ahdaf Soueif, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
65. Ibid., pp.124-5.

66. Ibid., p.130.
67. I do not mean to say that the pre-condition of honesty should only be peculiar to the Third-World intellectual practising postcoloniality in the First World. Intellectuals should always necessarily be 'honest', although I am forced to use this abstraction with all the implications of its possible relativistic use and/or abuse. For a lengthy discussion on the idea of the honesty of the intellectual and his ability to speak truth to power see Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).
68. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.39.
69. Ibid., p.39.
70. For a detailed discussion on the role and function of the *parrhesiastes* see Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*.
71. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p.51.

CHAPTER TWO

EDWARD W. SAID: THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

Edward W. Said was perhaps the first Third-World critic to address the complex question of the politics of representation most comprehensively in his book *Orientalism*.¹ This is in no way to disregard or avoid references to other notable works on the same subject. I particularly like to refer to the works of A.L. Tibawi, Syed Hussein Alatas, Anouar Abdel-Malek who were some of the foremost intellectuals to have broached the subject, along with such intellectuals as Abdullah Laroui, Talal Asad, and K.M. Panikkar.² The seemingly naïve and superlative assumption of the first sentence of this chapter would considerably ruffle critics like Ziauddin Sardar, who in an eponymous book has almost dismissed Said's claims to a critique of Orientalist tendencies of the West, and accuses him of almost sneaking his way up a ladder of success without acknowledging his precursors. Sardar writes:

Before the publication of *Orientalism*, Edward Said's much cited and contested study, critiques of Orientalism were confined to disciplinary boundaries such as Islamic Studies, linguistics, anthropology, sociology history and philosophy of history. Said, a Palestinian/American scholar, intellectual and

activist, borrowed and built upon the earlier studies of Tibawi, Alatas, Abdel-Malek, Djait and others such as Abdullah Laroui, Talal Asad, K.M. Panikkar and Romila Thapar; but he did not acknowledge any of them. Indeed, *Orientalism* seems to have emerged ready-made and fully-fledged, as though from nowhere, and proceeded to shape and dominate the debate.³

A few lines later Sardar refers to a series of essays by Marshall Hodgson, published between 1940 and 1960, in which he successfully critiqued Orientalism as a discourse of dominance of the West over the non-West.⁴ And this was done, Sardar scathingly notes, 'long before both Foucault and Said became fashionable'.⁵ He even compares Said's treatment of the French Orientalists such as Chateaubriand, Nerval and Flaubert with that of H. Djait's, and calls the former 'easily forgettable'.⁶

A closer analysis will reveal that Ziauddin Sardar is perhaps both right and wrong. He is right in marking out the predecessors from whom Said has freely borrowed, or whose tradition of critiquing the West Said is possibly emulating. Indeed, there has been a history of concerted protest against Western essentialism, or Orientalism much before the publication of Said's book in 1978. It would be foolhardy to deny the impact of some of these authors I have already referred to. But there are precisely two noteworthy reasons why we might call Said's *Orientalism* seminal.

First, as is clear from Sardar's earlier statement, most of the critiques of Orientalism were confined to specific disciplinary boundaries. Issues pertaining to Orientalism were discussed within parameters of codified, specific knowledge systems, and rarely was there any interdisciplinary interaction to problematize the very general nature of Western hegemony. The result was a lack of concerted protest, a single centre of power that could apply counter-hegemonic pressure. Edward Said's was a Herculean attempt to assimilate in a comprehensive manner, these weak centres of discussion into one (albeit arbitrary) discipline that could resist the discursive dominance of the Western academia. Questions that naturally arise, however, are about Said's own consolidated position in the Western academy, that have been raised not only by Sardar, but at different times by Arif Dirlik, John Mackenzie and Aijaz Ahmad.⁷ These are complex questions that I have put forth already in the previous chapter, and shall proceed to elaborate later in this chapter.

Second, Sardar's book and consequently his attack on Said, are based too much on the elaborations of Islamic historiography. Sardar's thesis lays much emphasis on Islam, and although he emphasizes other fields of study such as geography and military history, he is essentially interested in looking into those aspects of Orientalism that try to subvert or distort the ethical premises of Islam. Most of the historians or social scientists that he chooses have tried to defend a religion rendered vulnerable through hegemonic attacks by Orientalists in the West. In the course of their

discussion they have definitely talked about imperialism, the various tendencies of negative mythmaking (such as the myth of the lazy native, or of the dishonest servant, etcetera), colonial capitalism, and sundry other influences that Orientalist historiography had on the Western mind; but ultimately their work has remained more or less a monolithic defence of Islam, and a thwarting of Judaeo-Christian religious hegemony.

The basis of Said's work, however, is more objective and secular in import for a number of reasons. First, as a Christian born in Palestine it was perhaps easier for him to objectively comprehend the religio-ethnic problematic of the region that formed a basis of his later political writings which centred on Islam and the problems of its representation. Second, by not limiting himself to strict disciplinary boundaries (in his case literature or literary criticism) but by exploring other disciplines such as politics, geography, culture, history, he opens up the debate on Orientalism toward a much wider perspective than perhaps Alatas, Tibawi or Djait could possibly do. The pressure applied by *Orientalism* on Western hegemonic representations was thus unprecedented on the one hand and had to be seriously dealt with on the other. Third, by bringing all these Orientalisms together, under one umbrella, Said is perhaps trying to show his readers the heterogeneous nature of the problems rather than, as is often said, trying to homogenize these very different problems of representation. It is his scholarship and erudition that make him tackle this

huge burden of heterogeneity, creating out of it complex metaphors of protest against Western essentialism.

Said's Theoretical Base

It is somewhat difficult to comment on the theoretical framework that Said has chosen as the base from which to address the problems of representation or discursive coercion. He is a well read man with eclectic as well as esoteric interests, and that only complicates the problems of addressing his work. He has assimilated multiple influences from diverse sources, some of them even contradictory or irreconcilable, in order to elaborate his position. He has also traversed disciplines and moved in and out of various points of view in order to establish his views on the politics of representation. This becomes immediately evident in the way he talks about the introduction to his book *Culture and Imperialism*⁸:

I there begin to describe the emergence of a global consciousness in Western knowledge at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in such apparently unrelated fields as geography and comparative literature. I then go on to argue that the appearance of such cultural disciplines coincides with a fully global imperial perspective, although such a coincidence can only be made to seem significant from the point of view of later history, when nearly everywhere in the colonized world there emerged resistance to certain oppressive aspects of imperial rule like theories of

subject races and peripheral regions, and the notions of backward, primitive, or undeveloped cultures.⁹

It is noteworthy that within the span of a few lines Said has spoken about 'global consciousnesses, 'Western knowledge', geography, comparative literature, culture, and imperialism. This eclecticism, and yet the logical mindset to assimilate these hugely varied fields of knowledge is what sets Said apart from the rest of the scholars that Ziauddin Sardar talks about. Said's inherent scepticism about the possibilities of existence and pursuit of disinterested knowledge have dragged him towards such radically different thinkers as Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. On the other hand he is also considerably influenced by the more conventional and humanist thinkers like Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, and about the possibility of non-coercive knowledge. The multi-dimensional nature of his learning and scholarship, and the myriad issues that he addressed, make it considerably difficult to fix a definitive base of influence in Said's work. His readings have been culled from diverse sources from both the Western and the Eastern parts of the world, and the very extensive nature of his study and interests makes it difficult for his readers to locate him within a particular school of thought or epistemic system. Said was a keen learner, but his intellect was of the kind that continuously revised itself.

Thus, there is every possibility that a reader of Said might be a little confused when approaching his body of work for the first time. Said was keenly aware of the

problematic he was addressing. It was not only about the essentialist tendencies of the Western world; it was also about the problem of representation of the Third World. Who does one represent? How does one represent? These were questions that Said was one of the foremost to approach without the prejudices of his predecessors—those who were approaching the East-West relationship strictly in terms of opposition. From his First-World location Said had understood early that this battle of representation could not be won strictly in terms of opposition. Opposition would only create distance—an unbridgeable rift between the two worlds. His idea was of trying to build a consensus about the multiple possibilities of representation. The charge that is frequently levelled against Said is that he was looking at the problematic of representation of the Third World with the help of theoretical tools from the First World. I shall approach this question a little later, but let me say here that this was an obvious part of his strategy. Said was not raging a war against the West. His intention was not to antagonize, but to work towards a consensus. To put it simply, there was no denying the fact that the discursive tools of knowledge-formation had already been usurped by the West. Direct opposition would inevitably be lost in essentialism. Said was approaching the problem the other way round. He was using their epistemic systems, their theoretical tools, their location, to deconstruct their ideologies. In fact, he was even speaking in their language. Time and again he emphasized his American identity and addressed the First World as if he was one of them. He referred to their ideas of democracy and

equality and started to ask uncomfortable questions about their traditions of historical thinking, colonial mentality, foreign policy and imperial strategies. In one of his essays he writes:

...I cannot identify at all with the triumphalism of one identity because the loss and deprivation of the others are so much more urgent to me. There is some irony in the fact that as I speak as an American to South Africans at a South African university on the subject of academic freedom, the universities and the schools in Palestine are closed and opened by wilful and punitive decree of the Israeli military authorities....Certainly the subsidies from the United States continue and celebrations of Israeli democracy also continue.¹⁰

This is the strategy that Said maintains throughout in his writings. He realizes that he is treading on soft grounds. At the same time he needs to fight this battle of representation of the Third World—which also, in a way, includes his own. To use a term from Gayatri Spivak, I believe Said has consciously used a bit of strategic essentialism here to initiate a counter-discursive movement. Let me now try to locate the major Western, post-humanist influences on Edward Said.

Strong Influences: Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci

Michel Foucault has had a considerable influence on the early Said who was trying to work out the themes of power in the functioning of state hegemony. What initially attracted

Said toward Foucault was this obsessive engagement with the dynamics of power. Foucault essentially saw power as an impersonal force, an implicit discursive mechanism that always wants to maximize itself by all means possible. It is always/already present in the discourses of sexuality, punishment, knowledge and civilization, and Foucault saw the continuous and inevitable functioning of power within the system of the state, through the processes of punishment and incarceration. He saw the pervasive, and sometimes imperceptible, presence of power in the creation and sustenance of state institutions. He also discovered a principle of relative continuity in the various methods of incarceration practised within a society, a continuity in the various mechanisms of surveillance and punishment. He notes down a list of institutions that worked hand-in-hand to maintain this continuity of dominance and incarceration: the orphanage, the reformatory, the penitentiary, the prison; the school, the workshop, the almshouse; the hospital, the prison, and etcetera. All of these state institutions worked in collusion to format a near perfect mechanism of control and surveillance. Foucault writes:

A continuity of the punitive criteria and mechanisms, which on the basis of a mere deviation gradually strengthened the rules and increased the punishment. A continuous gradation of the established, specialized and competent authorities (in the order of knowledge and in the order of power) which, without resort to arbitrariness, but strictly according to the regulations, by means of observation and assessment

hierarchized, differentiated, judged, punished and moved gradually from the correction of irregularities to the punishment of crime.¹¹

Power is thus employed through a net-like organization. It is not something that percolates through the feudal/hierarchical network of a state, or based upon simple repression or juridical sanction, but a mechanism of impersonal presence in a society that is automatically and inevitably carceral in nature. It is this vision of power that exactly suited the imperial enterprise, and this formulation initially attracted Said towards Foucault.

However, some major differences in terms of their conceptions of power were soon discovered by Said. Although he was profoundly influenced by Foucault's vision of power and knowledge, and by the way he had theorized them, Said is rather reluctant to admit the very anonymous and strategically impersonal nature of power that Foucault enumerates. It might be said that Edward Said concretizes Foucault's almost 'metaphysical' conception of power, by modifying and applying it to the very political and necessarily instrumental nature of imperial discourse. Unlike Foucault, he views power not as an arbitrary, impersonal force, but one that is purposive and definitive, governed by the will and intention of individuals. Thus, while Foucault's vision of power is generally defeatist, Said on the other hand seems to be trying to extract the individual subject from its clutches. Said sees Foucault conceive power as a force that always wins, and implicates him (Foucault) of getting a

pleasure in talking about the victims of power. And Said strongly believes that such a conception of power is flawed. In an interview with Gauri Viswanathan in 1996 Said speaks clearly about this:

...Foucault is always talking about power from the point of view... of the way power always wins...And I think that always struck me as wrong, and my attitude to power, in *Orientalism* and elsewhere, has always been deeply suspicious and hostile. It took me another ten years to actually make that more explicit in *Culture and Imperialism*, where I was very interested not only in talking about the *formation* of imperialism, but also of *resistances* to it, and the fact that imperialism *could* be overthrown and *was*—as a result of resistance and decolonization and nationalism.¹²

He thus views the Western domination of the non-Western world as a definite manifestation of this very personal nature of power. Likewise he also believes that such power could be countered by personal kinds of resistance. He has faith in individual agency to refute and overcome this dominance of the power/knowledge paradigm. He sees the working of power as a very real presence that has to be physically opposed, and in this sense he was successful in reading the politics of the times not in terms of abstractions, but in terms of presences. In the interview with Gauri Viswanathan referred to earlier Said is very categorical about this:

...I think perhaps one of the things of which I am most proud is that I try to make discourse go hand-in-hand with an account of conquest, the creation of instruments of domination, and techniques of surveillance that were rooted not in theory but in actual territory.¹³

This working of power in 'actual territory' deeply disturbs Said's intellect. Gradually he comes to realize how Foucault's essentially theoretical concerns need to be concretized into real, discursive domains of deliberately political systems of knowledge creation that would literally counter conquest and domination. It is perhaps this passivity in Foucault's work that led him into a rather pessimistic view about power and how it could never be successfully subverted. And it is this inherent lack of hope in Foucault that perhaps made Said restive about his work by the time he finished *Orientalism*. As an intellectual belonging to the Third World, grappling with the very real problematic of trying to find a voice within the discursive domain of Western knowledge systems, Said required a more optimistic and perhaps a little less obtuse constituency to base his work on.

By the mid-1970s Said had already grown out of Foucault, and his increasing impatience becomes obvious in the following lines:

...he [Foucault] was really the *scribe* of power. He was really writing about the victory of power. I found very little in his work, especially after the second half

of *Discipline and Punish*, to help in resisting the kinds of administrative and disciplinary pressures that he described so well in the first part. So I completely lost interest in his work.¹⁴

This waning of hope in Foucault's works led him to find new methods of protest and a new idiom of resistance which he thought he would find in the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. He was one of the first in the United States to teach Gramsci, and he thought of making use of Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' as the tool with which to encounter Western dominance. However, he also realized that a mere theoretical launching of a counter-hegemonic movement would once again limit the entire framework of protest within the confines of the university, or the academic elite. It had to become, essentially, a part of a larger political movement that had a direct bearing with the workings of the wider society, rather than a sterile tool of theoretical intellection. This was because, the subalterns or the marginals were not a homogeneous group who could be represented in a consolidated manner within the confines of the academy. Also, in order that the myriad and diverse social groups be represented or spoken about, the integral historian (I have borrowed this term from Gramsci) needs to have an eclectic knowledge base, and the capacity to assimilate these diverse histories. Said, like Gramsci, had a similar interest in diverse groups of people. His interest in Gramsci was obvious as Gramsci's works showed him a way towards working beyond theory, and with the agenda of a direct reaching out to the masses. Gramsci writes:

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only "permanent" victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately....Every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian. Consequently, this kind of history can only be dealt with monographically, and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect.¹⁵

Said was immediately impressed by the rebellious quality of Gramsci's writing and thought this to be a way out of Foucauldian pessimism.

It is perhaps topical to note in this context that by the time Said abandoned Foucault as the basis of his idiom of protest, he had also grown very sceptical about theorizing protest. For that matter, he was having second thoughts about the function of theory itself. He was impatient about the fact that theory (literary or social or political) had acquired the status of a discipline and was being pursued for its own sake.

He considered theory essentially as a means to an end; as the methodological basis on which one could launch a protest movement, not the protest itself. On the contrary, he felt the need for a historical study of texts which would raise political and cultural issues and debate about the immediate importance of a moment in history, rather than 'massive, intervening, institutionalized presence of theoretical discussion' which throw up abstractions about the past or future.¹⁶

Coming back to Gramsci, Said's initial excitement with him, and his agenda of replacing Foucault's clinical pessimism with Gramsci's militancy, however, had to fizzle out soon enough. Gramsci was essentially a note-writer rather than a rigorous theorist who could formulate a well-defined mechanism of subverting the intricate and time-tested methods of discursive power. In a sense he was militant and radical and was a very forceful intellectual presence, but it was very difficult to derive from Gramsci's work a consistent political and philosophical position. Said ultimately discovered in him 'a kind of Italian cosmopolitan pessimism'.¹⁷ It was also rather difficult to use him methodologically, as he was never very detailed and thorough with his theoretical writings.

Thus, though the influences of both Foucault and Gramsci were profound, they failed to discover for Said a consolidated formula for representation. As a young Third-World intellectual working in the First-World academia, Said was really grappling with the problem of individual

identity. His belonging to the margin was a cause of continuous intimidation. Moreover, the theories of protest were easily essentialized by the all consuming hegemony of the Western academy. What was left for the Third-World intellectual was a sense of insecurity and fear. What Said was quick to realize, was the fact that no amount of armchair debating could ward-off this sense of insecurity. The weapon of the marginalized needed to be double-edged: on the one hand it had to have a theoretical/political base so that it could not be academically dismissed; on the other, it also needed to have a practicable, comprehensible and atheoretical appeal so that it could immediately involve participants beyond the academia. It is here that he realized the failure of both Foucault and Gramsci as individual icons of protest that could properly represent the margins. Interestingly, herein lies the answer to another implicit critique of Third-World intellectuals who were rampantly using theories born and bred in the First World. Most of them were not using these to get extra mileage within the academic circuit, and Said is a glaring case in point. He was writing at a time when both Foucault and Gramsci were quite fashionable in the Western academic culture. Said could have continued to use them to make his entry into the elite circle of theoretical experts easier. But he moved away as he felt that they could not help him in his enterprise of trying to qualify the politics of Third-World representation. He was interested in the emancipation of not only the individual marginalized subject, but also, in a way, a group, a community, or a people (I am reminded of Said's lifelong involvement as a public intellectual in the

question of Palestine, and the role of the United States in the conflict), and he realized that Foucault was too sophisticated and theoretical for mass appeal. Compounded with this was Foucault's all pervasive pessimism that realized the failure of the subject against the workings of power as an impersonal force. In reality, Foucault's writings left no space for a counter-hegemonic movement, because for him this hegemony was impersonal and hence irrefutable. Gramsci, on the other hand, was not theoretician enough to visualize a dependable framework for the politics of representation of the marginal. He could be quoted and referred to, but could never become the basis of a consolidated movement for the Third-World intellectual in the First.

Search For Idioms: 'Worldliness' And 'Amateurism'

Said's intellect flourished in this situation of despondency. By the time he had grown impatient with Foucault and Gramsci, he had already become an important intellectual presence within the Western academy. The pressure of his scholarship had, in a way, forced the American academy to find a place of some prestige for him within the metropolitan university in spite of his active political participation in the Israel—Palestine debate.

But it needs to be noted that Said was, after all, much more of an academic than a political man. What Said had always insisted on was the fact that in spite of his very active political presence outside, within the university he was very much a teacher of literature and literary theory, that he never carried his political notions to his classroom:

I've never used my classes to talk about political activism of the kind that I've done. I've stuck pretty carefully to the notion that the classroom is sacrosanct to a certain degree.¹⁸

But while teaching literature within the classroom he realized how the study and teaching of the so-called liberal arts were fraught with implicit nuances of authoritarian discourse, and that, ultimately, even the teaching of literature was bound to be political in its analytic import. How he encountered this discursive mechanism in his reading of the literature of empire he has discussed comprehensively in *Culture and Imperialism*. From his initial years of teaching literature in an American university Said began to realize the pressure of canonical texts, of how there were pre-conceived notions regarding the reception of particular texts that were written in certain parts of the world or by certain authors. He even discovered the politics of imperialism in apparently innocuous and politically naïve authors such as Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, or Charles Dickens.

What he also discovered with considerable impatience was that the study of theory was increasingly becoming too sophisticated and glamorized to serve its true purpose. Literary theory, particularly in the twentieth century, was primarily a weapon of representation. Movements such as feminism, postcolonialism or deconstruction were meant to rupture the centre of power at its very core and render its hegemonic enterprise vulnerable. The primarily political and emancipatory nature of theory

could never be denied. Terry Eagleton has put it succinctly in one of his lectures:

At the height of capitalist consumerism, American imperialism and the Civil Rights movement, it was becoming more and more difficult to conceal the fact that those areas of disinterested humane enquiry known as academic institutions were in fact locked directly into the structures of technological dominance, military violence and ideological legitimation. A new, more socially heterogeneous student body, who could not be expected any longer spontaneously to share the cultural class-assumptions of their teachers, thus effected a kind of practical 'estrangement' of those assumptions, which forced them in turn into the new forms of critical self-reflection... 'Theory' was born as a political intervention, whatever academic respectability it may since have achieved.¹⁹

Thus, theory was meant to represent the margins, to become a metaphor of protest that would consolidate the rights of those that were never heard. What Said discovered instead was a sad lack in all these theoretical enterprises to become true cornerstones of protest. Theory was gradually becoming too obtuse and abstract, far removed from the very basic and pedestrian enterprise of talking for the margins. Movements that were meant to be counter-hegemonic were easily being subsumed within the sophisticated seminar discussions and conference debates of metropolitan knowledge systems. It is

this anxiety for representation that led Said away from these too verbose theories of literature that failed to serve their primary purpose. As a Third-World intellectual fighting tooth and nail to establish his voice within the American academy, Said felt the need for a simpler and more direct approach towards the politics of knowledge and reading.

Amateurism: A Novel Strategy

As a corollary to this kind of direct approach that Said envisages, he reminds us of the admonition of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico that 'human history is made up by human beings'.²⁰ Said advocates what he calls 'amateurism' in intellectual life which is a metaphor for the condition of exile. Now, this concept of amateurism is rather novel and emerges out of what Said has termed 'secular criticism'.

The term secular criticism, simply defined, means a criticism free from the restrictions of intellectual specialisation. But once criticism is freed from intellectual specialisation it also runs the risk of becoming too subjective and thus open to various partisan influences and interest groups. Then, what does Said mean by secular criticism? How does he want it to operate? In a 1992 interview with Jennifer Wicke and Michael Sprinker, two of his former students and friends later in life, Said tries to elaborate on this idea. He defines this subjectivity in the perspective of nationalist, religious, or cultural identity—those which are formations easier to converge in. All these are kinds of fetishizations of identity that give rise to myriad forms of

desperate religious or fundamentalist sentiment in the form of a Christian world, or a Jewish world, or an Islamic world. On the other hand, the notion of secularism is devoid of these kinds of religio-ethnic subjectivisms and goes back to actual living human beings:

Men and women produce their own history, and therefore it must be possible to interpret that history in secular terms, under which religions are seen, you might say as a token of submerged feelings of identity, of tribal solidarity...But religion has its limits in the secular world.²¹

Thus, he calls for a secular and humane vision in order that one might address the issue of identity in a proper perspective. Here, we might say, Said becomes a humanist almost in the classical sense of the term (that is to say, 'humanism' devoid of the very political affiliations that are attached to it these days), almost on the lines of Erich Auerbach or Leo Spitzer, two of his early intellectual mentors. He talks of human history 'not being the result of divine intervention but a much slower process than the politics of identity usually allow'.²²

Once this secular idea of criticism widens his vision, the critic as an amateur must refuse to be dictated by professional specializations. It is in Said's idea of amateurism that his concern as a public intellectual emerges clearly. He tries to make his readers realise how narrow professional expertise of the intellectual, his excellence in research and study, are all easily subsumed by policy. The

true intellectual needs essentially to look beyond the constrictions of his profession into those matters that are politically and socially compromised—matters of justice, oppression, marginalisation, or constituency. Thus, instead of the intellectual locked up within his coterie, Said wants him to have an active public role, a direct connection with the socio-political history of his times. In this context then, the intellectual becomes an amateur in the truest sense. He learns to look beyond boundaries of disciplines or pedagogy. Incidentally, it is here that we note the faith Said has in the power of the intellectual in society, in the need for his/her direct participation in the life of his/her times. We can notice Said's optimism as an intellectual, a strong belief in the basic equation of the positive influence of an intellectual (amateur) upon the common people who are otherwise rudderless.

Worldliness: Towards the Ethico-political

This concept of worldliness that Said envisages emerges out of amateurism, and works in unison. Here Said talks about the function of criticism. He makes the intellectual encounter a basic question: what is the function of criticism? Is it a way of theorising literature and opening up new modes of critical thought that might titillate the university intellectuals down the years? Or is it supposed to provide a perspective on the world that we live in—a world which is continuously qualified in realistic terms by politics, suffering, war, injustice, commitment, policy, and etcetera?

Said very definitely believes in the latter. I have already spoken of Said's increasing impatience with the

artificial intellectualization of literary theory. In this idea of worldliness Said expresses a need for criticism to return to the real world where the critic is politically active and dissolved in the entire social process. He becomes a voice of dissent, someone who is located at an uncomfortable distance from the power centre and exerts a very real and irritating pressure on it. He reveals hypocrisy, uncovers the false, and prepares a ground for change. This intellectual is far removed from the one ensconced comfortably in a metropolitan university, who indulges in the quasi-religious quietism of abstruse theoretical thought and who can dismiss social involvement as lowly and unimportant.

This concept of worldliness is Said's expression of the function of the public intellectual. It is through the 'secular' return to the world that the intellectual might speak truth to power. It is obvious that Said was grappling with his own position as an intellectual when he thought of amateurism and worldliness. He consistently realized the plight of the post-colonial Third-World intellectual who, along with his theories, was being consumed by the metropolitan academy. Sophistication was actually a way of usurping. Said realized how the position of these intellectuals was being continuously compromised. This journey back, out of theory, was in a way his means of trying to re-position the co-ordinates of the Third-World intellectual within and without the academy. A socio-political involvement, a public role was essential to continue to be present in the map of influence and counter-influence.

The Public Role of the Intellectual

In this context, I believe, it is imperative that one undertakes a detailed study of the Reith Lectures of 1993, which Said delivered on the BBC, about what the public role of the writer and the intellectual need be. I have already mentioned this cursorily in the first chapter. Not only was this an attempt by Said to fix a reference frame for the intellectual and his functions; it was also, in a major way, a consolidation of his location as an intellectual and a teacher in an American university. He was a Palestinian Christian, a citizen of the United States, a Third-World expatriate intellectual working in the First-World academia, and very interested in the fate of his country of origin—Palestine. Many times in the lecture Said feels the need to emphasize that he was a citizen of the United States, addressing the people and the intellectuals of the country (United States) about the role and function of the intellectual. Here is an example:

For an intellectual who lives in America, there is a reality to be faced, namely that *our country* is first of all an extremely diverse immigrant society, with fantastic resources and accomplishments, but it also contains a redoubtable set of internal inequities and external interventions that cannot be ignored...(Italics mine).²³

The reason for such an emphasis is of course quite simple. One, he was in a way addressing the First-World politico-academic milieu—making them aware of the kind of

hegemonic and fiercely discursive political space that they inhabit. He, being one of them, realized the potential of such a milieu to fall into an acquiescent complacency, thereby into the trap of a regime of power. He was making the citizens of the First World aware of this. Second, this continuous emphasis on his citizenship was perhaps a veiled, protracted effort at being assimilated rightfully into the First World. The comfort of belonging is always the desire of the expatriate. I could be over-simplifying this aspect of my argument, but this repeated litany about being the citizen of the United States undercuts, ever so subtly, Said's claims about the similarities between the exile and the expatriate that I have discussed in detail in the first chapter.

However, one also needs to add that Said has tried all his working life in the United States to balance his role in between the exile and the expatriate. He has used the term 'exile' more in the metaphorical sense than in the real sense. As someone who held a tenureship in a premier First-World university he had somehow maintained his position as a sort of an outsider who continued to ask uncomfortable questions to the centre of power. This is where he tries to find a similarity between the locations of the exile and his own:

Exile for the intellectual in [the] metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation.²⁴

Throughout the Reith Lectures and elsewhere in his other writings he has tried always to maintain this ambivalent uncertainty about his location. This is quite interesting. I have already emphasized how Said has, all his life, worked more or less under an influence of humanist scholars—scholars who insist on a sound foundational base for the intellectual. Yet this ambivalence about location is perhaps a typical reaction of the Third-World intellectual working in the First World. This uncertainty, which was perhaps a part of Said's process of acculturation or assimilation/non-assimilation within the First World, was taken up later as a conscious strategy by his successors like Spivak or Bhabha. This anxiety about location, which was perhaps earnest in Said, veered towards a strategic postmodern stance in them. I shall come back to this aspect of location in my later chapters.

Said was perhaps most profoundly influenced in his assumptions about exile by Theodor Adorno whom he calls 'the dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century'.²⁵ This fascination with Adorno also had interesting implications. Adorno saw the condition of exile not only as a metaphoric one, but also as essential to the growth of the critical intellectual. He believed that the intellectual should learn to go beyond all discursive systems and be able to carry on his critical vocation from a position of intense and lonely subjectivity. In his Reith Lectures Said seems to admire this aspect of Adorno's personality:

Paradoxical, ironic, mercilessly critical: Adorno was the quintessential intellectual, hating *all* systems, whether on our side or theirs, with equal distaste. For him life was at its most false in the aggregate—the whole is always the untrue, he once said...²⁶

And this is why, Said believes, Adorno placed a high premium on subjectivity, the individual subject and his consciousness, which could not be arrested within the normativity of an administered society. Adorno's emphasis on subjectivity is noteworthy here. It is this individual subject-position that the champions of postcoloniality and postmodernity will emphasize in the later years. By admiring Adorno, Said is thus, perhaps, opening up this space where his successors will flourish in their sometimes deliberate uncertainty.

Coming back to Said, he sees the condition of exile as a model for the intellectual who feels tempted to conform and say 'yes' to be accommodated and feel secure. The exile teaches the expatriate intellectual to move away from the centre to the margin, to raise uncomfortable issues, and upset all (or any number of) discursive authorities. Although this condition of marginality might seem irresponsible or flippant, it frees you from those assumptions and cautions that make the intellectual 'afraid to overturn the applecart, anxious about upsetting fellow members of the same corporation'.²⁷

The Independence of the Intellectual: A Movement beyond Professionalism

Around the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century, the noted French intellectual Régis Debray noted a major change in the cultural role of the intellectuals of his country. He noticed how many of them were willingly moving away from their publishers and sometimes even the strict confines of academia and increasingly showing an interest in the mass media—in appearing for television talk shows, writing columns in newspapers, advising corporate bodies—on the whole appreciating and enjoying what one might call mass exposure and mass appeal. He writes:

By extending the reception area, the mass media have reduced the sources of intellectual legitimacy, surrounding the professional intelligentsia, the classic source of legitimacy, with wider concentric circles that are less demanding and therefore more easily won over...The mass media have broken down the closure of the traditional intelligentsia, together with its evaluative norms and its scale of values.²⁸

This trend had its own advantages and disadvantages. But one of the major changes that this had brought was in the much greater accessibility of the intellectual, and a widening of the space of participation of the intellectual in the life of his or her community. Even some of the foremost intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre or Simone De Beauvoir participated in the regular socio-political life and debates of the French nation. This trend, of course, had serious

implications in terms of the social fabric of a nation—where the direct participation of the intellectual in public life and debates helped in the consolidation of democracy, and in the creation of consensus among the common masses.

Edward Said sadly notes, however, that such a trend of the participation of the intellectual in the daily life of the society was only localized within France. Neither the other parts of Europe, nor the United States saw such a trend amongst their intellectuals. In the United States, particularly, the intellectual was seen, and still is seen as having generally an organic function, in his or her specific area of specialization. The intellectual in this case belongs to a group or a class, and loses his or her individual identity, and thus is not able to contribute to the general debates about everyday living or the rights or the demands of the citizens. On the contrary, he becomes an instrument in the hands of those in power, and only speaks up or expresses his opinion on his specific area of specialization, and that too only when it is asked for. Said says in his Reith Lectures:

With the increased number of twentieth-century men and women who belong to a general group called intellectuals or the intelligentsia—the managers, professors, journalists, computer or government experts, lobbyists, pundits, syndicated columnists, consultants who are paid for their opinions—one is impelled to wonder whether the individual intellectual as an independent voice can exist at all.²⁹

That is to say, Said insists on how this location of the intellectual within the acquiescent frame of the specialist compromises his basic function—that of speaking truth to power. Being reduced merely to an uncontroversial technician he is no longer instrumental in striking up debate or raise uncomfortable questions about the functioning of the state or the centre of power. The intellectual is therefore reduced to a writer of esoteric prose, a specialist with only a functional role in the society, whose job is to work towards academic or technical advancement and not social change.³⁰ The intellectual thus becomes merely a classroom technician who works for various patrons or agencies, armed with academic credentials and degrees, intimidating non-experts with his or her specialized prose and esoteric references, but not performing the function of the *parrhesiastes*—something that is most expected of him/her.

Said is considerably miffed by this function of the intellectual. In the present United States the intellectual is infected by an attitude of professionalism. Thus the mark of individuality, the committed and forceful voice of the intellectual is lost in this era of increasing corporatisation and professionalism. The definitive role of the intellectual is ideally not inside but outside the academy working towards enlightenment and emancipation and giving voice to the injustice around. This pervasive professionalism, on the other hand, has compromised the true vocation of the intellectual. Said categorically defines this professionalism:

By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and ‘objective’.³¹

The political presence of the intellectual is thus no longer a force to reckon with. By becoming a professional the intellectual automatically belongs into the group of the yeasayer, not giving any cause of worry to the discursive authority. On the contrary, his or her expertise in a particular field is sanctioned and certified by the proper authorities, and unless the intellectual is ‘politically correct’ he has little chance of acquiring the necessary nod from the said authority. The intellectual is thus in a unique situation of compromise in the era of specialization. Within the socio-political milieu of most of the First World, he has lost his public role completely, and has been co-opted into becoming a specialist or an expert, whose authenticity, moreover, needs to be sanctioned by the centre of power.

It is in the face of such a sad condition of co-option that Said gives his call for ‘amateurism’. It is an absolute imperative that the intellectual emerges out of his garb of the professional and once again adopts a public role. The easy exchange of ideas between the intellectual and the general

public is an imperative to challenge the discourses of power. In his life as an intellectual, Said himself has, time and again, come out of his shell of the university academic and played the role of the public intellectual to the hilt. A regular contributor to the Israel-Palestine debate, Said has been uninhibited in his support for the cause of Palestine, in spite of the very real threat of being ousted from his cushy university job in the United States. An expert in the field of English Literature, a connoisseur in the field of Western classical music, he has shown no signs of esoteric inclinations while participating in these very political debates. In this context, a critique can be launched about the works of the other two Third-World intellectuals I shall discuss in the course of the book. Neither Spivak nor Bhabha has ever shown such enthusiasm in participating in such public and political debates. This could well be because of the fact that they did not have such a burning issue like Palestine in front of them to play such a role. This is by no means devaluing the importance of either their works or their representative significance, but somewhere it is true that the kind of theoretical sophistication that they have shown is difficult for the common citizen to always comprehend. This could have been otherwise overlooked, but neither of these two has ever attempted to come out of this shell of intellectualism and address the common people about issues remotely political. This is a comment made in passing and does not, in any way, attempt to undercut the enormous value of the body of their work as Third-World intellectuals in the First World.

***Parrhesia* and its Implications**

I have already discussed in some detail how Said was influenced in his formative years as an intellectual by Michel Foucault, although in later years he decided to qualify his opinion about this French intellectual. However, the influence was rather profound, and this indeed is one of the reasons why he has gone back to Foucault's ideas about the state and its governance. It is interesting to notice how Foucault had also discussed, in some detail, the trope of the intellectual coming out of his private space and speaking truth to power.³² The obvious digression notwithstanding I shall take the liberty here of discussing in some detail the idea of *parrhesia* or speaking truth to power, as explicated by Foucault in his book.

In the Fall Term of 1983 Michel Foucault delivered a series of lectures at the University of California at Berkeley in a seminar entitled 'Discourse and Truth', where he studied the Greek notion of *parrhesia* or 'frankness in speaking the truth'. The literal translation of *parrhesia* into English is 'free speech', which does not bring out the problematics of the term in all its aspects. In ancient Greece *parrhesia* was a kind of speech activity that involved a number of parameters relating to the *parrhesiastes* or the user of *parrhesia*.

First, and the most inevitable, is the fact that the *parrhesiastes* must speak the truth. Of course 'truth' itself is a problematic term, as I have already discussed in the first chapter. It might lead one to complex metaphysical debates of the Platonic or the Hegelian order on the one hand, or the

postmodern order on the other. However, in this case, truth constitutes what the *parrhesiastes* *thinks* is true or *knows* to be true, and is devoid of the metaphysical or postmodernist implications of truth, and therefore, leads us into a subjective rather than a universalist order of conception. Of course, the corollary that the *parrhesiastes* has an access to the truth is preconditioned by the fact that he has certain moral qualities necessary for the conception of truth.

Second, the *parrhesiastes* is always in a situation of disadvantage when he speaks the truth. This is because, theoretically, the speaker must be in a position of inferiority with respect to the one he addresses, and thus there is always the danger of incurring the wrath of the person spoken to. The subject who speaks the truth might be punished by the power that be—be it the king, the ruler, the government, the colonizer, or the employer as the case may be. The power centre can never be the *parrhesiastes*.

Third, in *parrhesia*, telling the truth is regarded as a *duty*. The orator is free to keep silent, but tells the truth out of his own accord or sense of responsibility, as he considers it to be his duty to speak the truth. Foucault has summarized the concept of *parrhesia* in the following manner:

Parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relationship to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific

relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia*, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.³³

What emerges as the central argument is that it becomes necessary to speak truth to power, not only due to the fact that power sometimes needs criticism, but also due to some indomitable urge within the individual to articulate his rightful feelings. Thus although it might seem that *parrhesia* involves a lot of formal decorum and perhaps a final moment of crisis, there are forms of *parrhesia* that involve neither.

Edward Said is inviting the intellectual to play the role of the *parrhesiastes*, something that is being lost in the increasing propensity of the intellectual to become a professional. Said emphasises throughout the course of his Reith Lectures that the intellectual is neither a functionary nor an employee of the government to be completely dedicated in consolidating its policy goals. The moral quality that Foucault talks about is compromised, Said fears, through awards and gifts and positions of power that the authorities shower on the intellectual. It is the duty of the intellectual to

consciously evade such techniques of essentialism, and indulge in a game of *parrhesia* with the authorities. Of course Said is intensely aware of the lures and temptations showered on the intellectual, and realizes how it is not always possible for him/her to resist either:

Many intellectuals succumb completely to [the] temptations, and to some degree all of us do. No one is totally self-supporting, not even the greatest of free spirits.³⁴

And this would be the reason why Said insists that the intellectual step out of his garb of professionalism and become an amateur. Power wants the intellectual to be and forever remain a professional. This gives power a sense of security, and they shower privileges and favours on the intellectual. So long as the intellectual remains within the confines of his or her discipline, and contributes theoretically or otherwise towards the development of the knowledge base of his/her subject, there are no ripples within the discourse of the state. But as soon as the intellectual chooses to voice his or her opinion about policy matters, the tentacles of the state become active. They try to determine whether this intellectual is speaking for or against them. If it is the former, he or she is lauded, showered with favours and privileges. If, however, it is the other way round, the awards dry up, the privileges, if any, are taken away and there are continuous attempts at coercion and forceful assimilation. As an amateur, the intellectual can play the role of the dissenter much better. He or she has come out of his or her

professional milieu and it is less easy for power to either understand or react to his or her intentions immediately. This could be a successful strategy of intervention on the part of the intellectual—where the sudden amateurish participation in the politics of the state unsettles the structures of power. They cannot place him or her within the set co-ordinates, and the intellectual, in order that he is able to counter essentialism, needs to try and maintain this ambivalent amateurism throughout. For Said, the role of the intellectual as an amateur is cut out—and that is asking uncomfortable questions and opposing discourse:

...the intellectual must be involved in a lifelong dispute with all the guardians of sacred vision or text, whose depredations are legion and whose heavy hand brooks no disagreement and certainly no diversity. Uncompromising freedom of opinion and expression is the secular intellectual's main bastion: to abandon its defense or to tolerate tamperings with any of its foundations is in effect to betray the intellectual's calling.³⁵

Thus, clearly, Said is envisaging a very public role for the intellectual. He or she needs to take a principled position in terms of what he or she thinks is right. The amateur, unlike the professional, works under no pressure of being objective or balanced or moderate. The amateur intellectual should necessarily be controversial and very political. He or she works under no lure for an honorary degree, or a prize, or

may be an ambassadorship. He/she speaks as a representative of the people, as the public face of the society.

The 'Public' Role of *Orientalism*

It is imperative that one discusses *Orientalism* when one is talking about Edward Said. The influence this book had on studies about the Orient almost gave it a canonical status within the paradigm of academic protest against Western hegemonic dominance. The counter-discursive pressure that *Orientalism* applied on the creation and formation of knowledges has been acknowledged with much respect by scholars associated with and who represent the Third World. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls it 'the source book in our discipline':

Said's book was not a study of marginality, not even of marginalization. It was the study of the construction of an object, for investigation and control. The study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said's, has, however, blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for. It is an important (and beleaguered) part of the discipline now.³⁶

Some Critiques of *Orientalism*

Of course the reception of the book was not one of unanimous praise. Hostile criticisms from all over the world laid out and explained the theoretical and methodological loopholes of the book. The recent attack on Said's method by

Ziauddin Sardar has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Significant protests and criticisms were also initiated by Dennis Porter, Aijaz Ahmad, Robert Young and many others.

Dennis Porter

Dennis Porter, for example, argues how Said fails to stick to any consistent methodological apparatus while talking about truth and ideology. On the one hand, Said talks about the 'Orient' being a Western construction. On the other hand, he appears to suggest that there is a 'real Orient' beyond these theoretical (or atheoretical and arbitrary) constructions of the West. Porter is also at pains to understand why Said fails to realize hegemony as a process that emerges by consent rather than by force. He accuses Said of failing to understand Gramsci's theory of hegemony in the proper perspective. There is, Porter feels, a potential contradiction between discourse theory and Gramscian hegemony. This is the reason why, according to Porter, Said seems to have homogenized the texts he has chosen for critiquing in *Orientalism*. The failure to historicize these texts adequately has led Said to view all of them in terms of the homogeneous paradigm of discourse theory. Each discipline that he has chosen, each text that he analyzes comes out of different considerations of discursivity, and hence cannot be spoken of as if they form a unilateral pattern of historiographical discursivity. In fact, Porter argues, that many of these discourses are in contradiction to each other and hence need to be addressed from a very heterogeneous space of

interaction. Said, he says, failed to understand this conflict. He also argues that Said does not distinguish between the literary instance from the more transparently ideological forms like history or geography or anthropology. Porter also accuses Said of a rampant misreading of literary texts. Said, he says, fails to realize that the literary text might very well create a distance between itself and the ideological formations or discursive assertions of the state where it is conceived.³⁷

Michael Richardson

The anthropologist Michael Richardson has also lambasted Said for certain assumptions he has made. He is particularly disturbed by the kind of intervention that Said has attempted into the field of anthropology. Although Said has not addressed the discipline of anthropology directly in his critique of Orientalism, Richardson feels that the discipline automatically falls into the purview of Said's analysis. Richardson's critique begins with the basic problem that Said discovers in the formations of Orientalism—that of the methodological separation between the self and the other. The discipline of anthropology is founded on this basic methodological separation between the self and the other. Richardson feels that if Said's argument be accepted, and the self-other paradigm be done away with, then the very legitimacy of the discipline of anthropology will be brought into question. He calls Said 'manifestly idealist' and believes that by his critique Said 'simply adds one more level of

mystification to what is already a difficult terrain to survey'.³⁸

Richardson is particularly irritated by the way Said has, it seems to him, first praised and then abandoned the noted anthropologist and scholar on Islam—Clifford Geertz. In *Orientalism* Said had written how Geertz's interest in Islam was 'defined intellectually' and not by any kind of Orientalist tendency.³⁹ He also saw Geertz's interest in Islam 'discrete and concrete enough to be animated by the specific societies and problems he studies and not by the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrines of Orientalism'.⁴⁰ But Richardson notes with much wry humour how, a few years later, the works of Geertz had been transformed, in Said's terms, into simply 'standard disciplinary rationalizations and self-congratulatory clichés...'.⁴¹ It is obvious here that Richardson failed to understand the strategy of continuous shifts that Said was trying to assume (although, one must admit, that he was not very successful in these attempts in the manner in which his successors were) in the later years to avoid assimilationist practices that were very much a reality even within the university premises. In his intense anger Richardson writes:

In 1978 he had been seeking to place himself within 'Western' discourse, almost in the role of a radical reformer. By 1983, he is clearly seeking to orient his critique differently, seeking to find a place within a 'space' of anti-imperialist studies, in which the work of Geertz does not fit.⁴²

Richardson believes that Said is attempting to establish, what he calls, a 'catch-all critique' where he(Said) provides the means to dispose of all that he finds objectionable and to praise whatever he seems to approve.⁴³ In this Richardson discovers the same kind of power relation in operation that Said discovers in the Orientalists whom he critiques.

The other interesting observation that Richardson makes is that Said denies any form of existing reciprocity between the subject (that is the Orientalist) and the object (that is the Orient and its people). He(Said) believes that the entire epistemology of Orientalism is a Western construct and has neither the approval nor the real presence of the Oriental subject. It was a mythographic construct that helped in the European project of imperialism, where the Orientalist was a passive pawn and the Oriental subject was an imaginary construct. If that is so, argues Richardson, then Said should not have developed an alternative model, because in that case, he was basically fighting a battle with shadows:

In fact, since the object has no real existence, being only a conceptualization of the subject's mind, it can never be a question of the former acting upon the latter...The only way out of the impasse is for the subject to develop representations of the object that would represent the object more faithfully...But then by what right can Said stand as a representative of the Orient?⁴⁴

These were important and relevant questions that Said had to answer.

Aijaz Ahmad

Aijaz Ahmad assumes the typical leftist stance and expresses concern about Said's affiliation to the kind of history writing that questions the 'very facticity of facts so that it will eventually force a wide range of historians around the globe—some of the Indian Subalternists, for example—to start putting the word 'fact' in quotation marks'.⁴⁵ He has definite problems with Said's choice of the Foucauldian discursive structure that questions the very possibility of making true statements. The other telling concern that Ahmad addresses is the kind of selective memory that Said's book incites, and a consequent probability of the rise of Third-Worldist nationalisms in their extreme forms. Over and above all these, Ahmad is disturbed by the way Said and his Third-World colleagues theorize their marginality from their privileged locations in the metropolitan university. I shall discuss in brief a few of the points that Ahmad makes in his critique of *Orientalism*.

One of the basic problems that Ahmad seems to have with Said's conceptions of Orientalism is about its origins. Ahmad finds out at least three definitions of Orientalism that Said has given in his book and discovers the chances of a deep methodological disparity if all of them are taken together.⁴⁶ In the first, Said defines Orientalism as the practice of the Orientalist—that is the scholar (anthropologist, or sociologist or historian or philologist)

who studies and/or writes about the Orient. In the second he calls it a style of thought based on the epistemological and the ontological distinction between the East and the West. In the third, he sums it up as a corporate institution that develops a discourse of domination of the East by the West.⁴⁷ In this last definition Said locates the eighteenth century as 'a roughly defined starting point' for the practise of Orientalism. This is where, Ahmad says, that he is confused. He is unable to fix a temporal base for Orientalist practice. If Said is tracing the history of Orientalism from the classical period of Aeschylus, through Dante to Marx and ultimately, Ahmad does not forget to mention, Bernard Lewis, then how can he possibly take the eighteenth century as the starting point? :

This, then, raises the question of the relationship between Orientalism and colonialism. In one sort of reading, where post-Enlightenment Europe is emphasized, Orientalism appears to be an ideological corollary of colonialism. But so insistent is Said in identifying its origins in European Antiquity and its increasing elaboration throughout the European Middle Ages that it seems to be the *constituting element*, transhistorically, of what he calls 'the European imagination'.⁴⁸

There is, I feel, a misunderstanding involved here. Ahmad perhaps fails to realize that Said here is making an implicit distinction between the epistemic or conceptual phenomenon of 'imagining' the Orient, and the discursive one of 'ruling'

it. The structures of power that conceptualized, wrote and spoke about the Orient in the eighteenth century, and later, were systematic attempts at discursive control that consolidated the very political enterprise of imperialism. The basic thrust in Said's work has been necessarily political, and it was obvious that his arguments and contentions about Orientalism would subsequently veer more towards the political than towards the conceptual (or philosophical).

Another major concern in Ahmad's argument is the development of a branch of literary theory called 'Colonial Discourse Analysis'. He says that it is under the influence of Edward Said that such a field of study gained such discursive importance. He does not, of course, mean to demean or dismiss Said's achievement on this count, but feels that there are certain pronounced aporetic limitations in the development of this discourse. Ahmad argues that Said's obsessive habit of locating and critiquing the tropes of colonialism as the chief thrust in trying to analyze the cultural formations of a nation is somewhat biased. He does not undermine the importance of colonial discursive formations in the development of the cultural climate of a colonized nation. But he also believes that there could be and are various other considerations that need to be emphasized when we are talking about the cultural make-up of a nation or a civilization. He writes:

A notable feature of *Orientalism* is that it examines the history of Western textualities about the non-West quite in isolation from how these textualities

might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonized countries: not as an undifferentiated mass but as situated social agents impelled by our own conflicts, contradictions, distinct social and political locations, of class, gender, region, religious affiliation, and so on—hence a peculiar disjuncture in the architecture of the book.⁴⁹

Ahmad also suggests that there is a basic flaw in the manner in which Said has developed his critique. Said's basic argument has been that the Orient has always been represented by the West since almost the classical period. But all the voices that Said has used in his critique of the tendencies of Orientalist discourse, except his, are voices from the West. Here Ahmad accuses Said of falling into a trap of unconscious self-reflexivity that has implicitly undermined his critique. I find this critique of Said somewhat unfounded. I have already emphasized that Said belonged to a school of Western liberal humanist thought, and his years of intellectual formation were underlined by the pervasive presence of Western epistemic tropes. This is the reason why we see Said using Western theoretical machinery in his critique. I see no reason in the argument that if you are brought up within the tradition of a particular school of thought you cannot use its tools to undercut its discursive formations. Second, Said did not have the necessary training in the schools of Eastern theorizing to make a considerable intellectual impact by using them as his

theoretical base. If he was using the Western tools, he was using them for the proper consolidation of his argument, which he could not have achieved if he were using indigenous critical tools. Third, the reason for the almost pervasive impact of *Orientalism* is due to the fact that it has reached and qualified that space which mattered the most in terms of the development of colonial discourse—that is to say the West. Said was not only critiquing the discourse of Orientalism in the West, but he was also trying to qualify the thinking habits of the colonized elites who have, in their own ways, continued the hegemonic formations within these colonized societies for their own benefit. The book has reached them as well, almost in the form of a caveat announcing the beginning of a counter-discourse. Fourth and most important is the fact that Said also had a very active political life in the West. He was not an armchair intellectual and his voice was heard. Thus, even if he was using Western tools for the sake of grounding his arguments, the logic or intention of his argument would rarely be misunderstood. He was usurping and using the Western theoretical tools to undercut their own traditions of discursivity. Such a counter-hegemonic exercise is more commendable than perhaps Ahmad can conceive of from his less problematic location. And, for that matter, do we dismiss Ahmad's arguments summarily by an identical logic just because he has consistently used Marxism as his primary theoretical tool?

Ahmad's conservative Marxism has also somewhat come in the way of his critique of Said. As early as 1978, with the publication of his book *Orientalism*, Said was

anticipating some of the later postmodern developments in the debate about the politics of representation. His call for 'amateurism' and 'worldliness' on the part of the intellectual was an early call to the counter-discursive dynamic which was developed later on by the likes of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Ahmad cannot accept this kind of an intellectual who is shifty and clever, continuously vacillating between political positions, and avoiding all attempts of fixing him within a certain framework. From his training in Classical Marxism, Ahmad perhaps finds it difficult to understand this locational dynamic of the Third-World intellectual working under qualified circumstances in the First World. The kind of Leftism that people such as Said practise is beyond his conservative conception. His frustration is evident in the way he confusedly assesses this new band of intellectuals, failing to locate them within set paradigms of a traditional Left. He discovers, with much anger and distaste, the growing rise of a new brand of intellectuals in 'bourgeois countries' who enjoy leftist legitimacy by insistently talking about the Third World, or Cuba, or national liberation, but who are balatanly anti-communist. Neither would most of them have any training in other forms of classical Marxism, namely social democracy, or direct associations with labour movements—exposures, that is to say, which would make them 'comrades' in the true sense of the term. It is only then, according to Ahmad, that they could qualify themselves as Leftists in the truest sense. What he sees them doing, instead, is:

...invoke an anti-bourgeois stance in the name of manifestly reactionary anti-humanisms enunciated in the Nietzschean tradition and propagated now under the signature of anti-empiricism, anti-historicism, structuralism and post-structuralism, specifically Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Glucksmann, Kristeva, and so on.⁵⁰

It is clear from this argument that Ahmad does not agree with the newly founded traditions of anti-humanism that were associated with the names of Foucault, Derrida and the likes. Here lies the basic disagreement with Said. His consistent use of Foucault, at least in his early writings, and the movement toward an arbitrary interventionism (through amateurism) in later years, completely unsettles the foundational ideas nurtured by Ahmad. Moreover, he is also confused by the way in which Said has tried to marry off the traditions of humanism and anti-humanism. Thus, although his critique of Said's argument in *Orientalism* can be accepted on many accounts, his traditional Marxist reaction to the neo-Leftism practised by Said and his peers in the First World is perhaps unfounded. Ahmad, it seems, has failed to understand Said's theoretical logic.

Robert Young

Robert Young goes back to the much-discussed problems of epistemology in Said's work. He argues that in using Foucault or Gramsci, or being influenced by Spitzer or Auerbach, Said is borrowing from the same humanist tradition that he sets out to oppose. *Orientalism* thus

becomes a kind of self-reflexive exercise that helps to consolidate Western epistemic traditions rather than opposing their hegemonic dominance. Young's contention is simple. He argues that Said has rightfully critiqued the hegemonic constructions within the discourses of Western knowledge systems in his book *Orientalism*. The chief objection to his book has been that he does not offer an alternative to the phenomenon that he criticizes. Said categorically refuses to be drawn into the argument on the ground that there should be no reason why there needs to be an alternative at all. But what Young finds problematic is that Said does not talk about how he separates himself from these coercive epistemic structures that he critiques so vehemently. Young writes:

What method can he use to analyse his object that escapes the terms of his own critique? The absence of such a method constitutes the significant lacuna of the book, with the result that in many cases Said finds himself repeating the very structures that he censures.⁵¹

Young is perhaps right, in a way, in accusing Said for his 'unwillingness to pursue [the] problem of methodology in any rigorous way'.⁵² Even when Said was attacking almost all the disciplinary formations of Western epistemology, he did not seriously consider the need for either developing, or adhering to a set methodological paradigm. From the kind of intervention that he was attempting into the discursive constructions of the West, it was clear that he was

anticipating the logic of postmodernism. But in spite of his inclinations to postmodernism (particularly in his knack for the ideas of 'worldliness' and 'amateurism') he never clearly declared his allegiance to it. Critics such as Aijaz Ahmad and Bernard Lewis have consistently accused him of using the tropes of postmodernism to evade certain methodological knots that he was getting into, but Said never seriously felt the need to defend his methodological apparatus. It is this part of Said's technique of intervention that Young finds problematic, and one tends to think that Young has a point in this. Of course, on the other hand, by not declaring his methodology as postmodern in so many words, Said was actually making exactly the same point.

Bernard Lewis

Bernard Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Studies at the Princeton University, has been one of the sharpest of his critics that Edward Said had to contend with. Since he himself was dealing with the Orient, and particularly with Islamic history, Lewis took Said's arguments in *Orientalism* personally. Of course, there were reasons for this, as is evident from Said's direct reference to Lewis in his book. He was directly attacking Lewis's agenda and Lewis had every right to react. Said wrote:

Lewis is an interesting case to examine...because his standing in the political world of the Anglo-American Middle Eastern Establishment is that of the learned Orientalist, and everything he writes is steeped in the "authority" of the field. Yet for at least a decade and

a half his work in the main has been aggressively ideological, despite his various attempts at subtlety and irony. I mention his recent writing as a perfect exemplification of the academic whose work purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda *against* his subject material.⁵³

It is quite obvious that Lewis would not take such an attack lying down. After the publication of *Orientalism* he comes down heavily on Said, not only questioning his scholarship and methodology, but also his intention in critiquing the practice of Orientalism. Lewis accuses Said of writing 'science fiction history' in *Orientalism* and its 'lexical Humpty-Dumptyism', in one of his essays.⁵⁴

Lewis argues how Said had completely misunderstood the project of Orientalism or Orientalist studies—either because he lacked knowledge of the entire history of such a discipline, or he was deliberately myopic to suit his own political purpose. For example, Lewis is surprised by Said's reduction of the cartographic space of the Orient to the Middle East, and the further confinement of the Middle East to only a part of the Arab world. Lewis believes that by eliminating the Turkish and Persian studies on the one hand and Semitic studies on the other, Said isolates the study of the Arabs from both their historical and philological contexts. Moreover, Lewis believes that Said is guilty of a major elision when he talks about Orientalism only with reference to the French and the English, and with scant

mention of the Germans and the Russians—nations that were no less important in the growth and development of Orientalist studies. Lewis writes:

Indeed, any history or theory of Arabic studies in Europe without the Germans makes as much sense as would a history or theory of European music or philosophy with the same omission...It reveals a disquieting lack of knowledge of what scholars do and what scholarship is about.⁵⁵

Lewis is also extremely critical of Said's praise for the French scholar Raymond Schwab and his study of the Orient.⁵⁶ He believes that Said had completely misunderstood Schwab's project and applied his framework incorrectly to another region and another purpose. Schwab, Lewis writes, was a scholar of Indology, and his study of the Orient was generally confined to India. Said, while appropriating Schwab, deliberately overlooked this Indian aspect of his work, and applied his ideas generally to the Islamic world as well. Lewis argues how the history of the relationship between Europe and India could not be confused with the history of the relationship between Europe and the greater Islamic world. The relationship between Europe and India developed at a time when India was falling under foreign control, and the nature of the relationship could be explained in terms of Europe's commercial and military/imperial interests in South and Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world could be traced back to the High Middle Ages,

when Islam was a power block and Europe had to contend with it on very different terms than in the case of India. It was more of a cautious defence of a beleaguered Christendom than a hegemonic enterprise of discursive superiority. Moreover, the Europeans of the Middle Ages would be more interested in Turkish rather than Arabic, as that was the official language of government in all Arab countries east of Morocco. Ultimately, Lewis argues that:

Although the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world was later transformed and in some measure even reversed, it remained profoundly different from the European relationship with India.⁵⁷

Lewis thus accuses Said of consistently and capriciously toying with historical background, and arbitrary rearrangement of political positionalities to suit his purpose.

Even if we take Lewis' critique at face value and concede that Said was distorting history to suit his purpose, there is a certain aspect of Said's work that critics like Lewis overlook. Said was not a historian and neither was he attempting to rewrite the history of the relationship between Europe and Islam. Through his multi-disciplinary technique he was trying to reconsider the entire epistemic format of reading that was in vogue in Europe, and in the rest of the world by default. He was trying to re-examine the power structures that are always and inevitably in operation when we belong to or write from within certain disciplinary parameters. Said attempts to deconstruct the disciplinary paradigms that have, down the ages, influenced our study of

history and society as a whole, thereby producing a knowledge base that is inevitably biased and discursive. The rupture that Said attempts encompasses the study of the entire discipline of the humanities and he had to make certain generalizations. There are major flaws in his work, but I guess that is inevitable when someone is trying to reconsider the entire epistemic logic of disciplinary formations. It is not that Said himself did not realize this, and that is one of the reasons why he was making an early, albeit sceptical, move towards postmodernism—where all disciplinary considerations can be qualified within an encompassing heterogeneity. Lewis also recognizes this, and in order to consolidate his arguments against Said, he comes down heavily on postmodern practise. When he cannot deal with Said's disciplinary vacillations, he tries to undermine it by calling it postmodern and hence irrelevant:

According to a currently fashionable epistemological view, absolute truth is either nonexistent or unattainable. Therefore, truth doesn't matter; facts don't matter. All discourse is a manifestation of power relationship, and all knowledge is slanted...This is demonstrated in *Orientalism*, in which scholars whose methods and procedures are indistinguishable by any scholarly or methodological criterion are divided into sheep and goats according to their support or lack of support for Arab causes. Such support, especially when buttressed by approved literary or social theories, can more than

compensate for any lack of linguistic or historical knowledge.⁵⁸

Here Lewis is defeated in his argument. If whatever he determines as a 'lack' can be approved by some literary or social theories, he should at least learn to accept if not approve of it. Postmodernism and its pervasive uncertainty might not be approved by the school of thought he belongs to, but that does not immediately nullify either its assumptions or its methodological success. Is he not, then, guilty of the same faults he accuses Said of falling prey to: arbitrary assumptions and capriciousness?

Critics such as James Clifford or Michael Dutton have also commented at length on Said's theoretical inconsistencies and have argued how Said's position as a representative Third-World intellectual has been thoroughly compromised by his consistent use of Western pedagogical tools of protest.

Said's Position in *Orientalism*

In the face of such consolidated criticism from the academia in both the East and the West, Said has tried to clear his position not only in books and articles that he wrote later, but also in interviews and lectures. While some critiques were direct attempts to defame him and disadvantage him politically (for example, the one by Bernard Lewis, the powerful presence in the Anglo-American Middle Eastern Establishment), others like that of Ahmad or Young were genuine attempts to critique his problematic position with respect to Western epistemology.

In his 'Afterword' to *Orientalism* Said clearly states his intention in writing the book:

I intended my book as part of a pre-existing current of thought whose purpose was to liberate intellectuals from the shackles of systems such as Orientalism: I wanted readers to make use of my work so that they might then produce new studies of their own that would illuminate the historical experience of Arabs and others in a generous, enabling mode.⁵⁹

Thus, he was trying to provoke an alternative mode of critical thinking and a consequent re-location of intellectual history on a multicultural plane such as would rupture the unilateral Eurocentric discourses of history. His immediate agenda was to locate the very problematic discursive development of Western intellectual history, and undercut, and consequently unsettle its monolithic development by a heterogeneous pattern of studying history and society. Contrary to certain protracted and perhaps deliberate misunderstanding of Said's agenda, he was absolutely aware of the methodological problematic that his writings constituted and gave rise to:

Orientalism is theoretically inconsistent, and I designed it that way: I didn't want Foucault's method, or anybody's method to override what I was trying to put forward. The notion of a kind of non-coercive knowledge, which I come to at the end of the book, was deliberately anti-Foucault.⁶⁰

What is important here to understand is the understated logic of such methodological messing up. It was a deliberate attempt at amateurism, of trying to find a way out of sophisticated theorizing that was at the heart of the Western hegemonic academia. The intellectual has to re-locate himself continuously, be in a perpetual state of flux, if he has to steer clear of essentialist agency and say what he has to say. What Said wants to do is to open up new platforms of discussion, one after the other, in quick succession, so that the critical space increases in a manner that the intellectual might emerge out of overbearing hegemonic pressure of canonicity and speak truth to power. He insists that the intellectual develop a 'critical attitude':

...I think that's what education is all about—to instil a critical sense, a kind of nasty, demanding, questioning attitude to everything that's put before you.⁶¹

The heterogeneity in *Orientalism* is precisely born out of this questioning of the consistent pattern of Western scholarship.

Not only does the heterogeneity in *Orientalism* question the theoretical academia, it also questions the cultural component of historical study—the ones that have deep roots in imperialism and representation. By continuously referring to such presences as Ali Mazrui or Hussain Fawzi or Milad Hanna and the authenticity of their discourses, Said effects the opening up of a counter-cultural space—one that is adamantly authenticating a counter-discursive reading, and thereby raising intriguing questions

on historicism and the formation of a homogeneous historicity.⁶² Simply put, Said was trying to authenticate these voices and their readings of cultural history:

Where I think *Orientalism* was useful was in those works that looked at the cultural component of forms of domination as giving rise to Africanist, Indianist, Japanesist etc., types of discourses; as having, in a very narrow sense, played an important constitutive role in talking about those places.⁶³

However, the problem of playing such a role of opening up of cultural spaces has led critics such as Aijaz Ahmad to accuse Said of speaking up for the cause of nationalism. Unfortunately, however, Said was more of a liberationist than a nationalist. He was not trying to provoke any kind of deliberate nationalist or separatist ethos as an alternative to Western hegemonic cultural forms. On the contrary, he was trying to address what constitutes overlapping areas of experience. His contrapuntal style of reading cultural history was a means of trying to generate a genuine polyphony that would create interdependent histories rather than a monolithic academic construct that would facilitate coercion in various forms—cultural, economic, or imperialistic. This is where, I suppose, Said can be located in the First World—in trying to strike a liberationist balance. He becomes the intellectual who masterminds or hovers around the borderline of ‘overlapping territories’, thereby creating a fluid dynamics of movement between cultures and histories.

Contrapuntal Reading: Resistance, Not Opposition

Said borrowed his idea of contrapuntal reading from the Canadian virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould who peculiarly elaborated the concept of contrapuntal performance, which is an ability to elaborate intricately a particular musical theme. Said takes up this idea of contrapuntality to establish a counterpoint between imperial narratives and postcolonial perspectives. It is a way of undercutting the univocal focus of canonical texts in order that a heteroglossial mode of reading might be initiated. The whole idea behind such contrapuntal reading is to establish the quintessential hybridity of cultural forms and initiate a fluidity that avoids a rhetoric of blame. This might be done by an overlapping of metropolitan and colonial discourses—histories, social doctrines, literatures etcetera. And this is precisely the point where Said carefully departs from Foucault. Foucault's pessimistic view of the workings of power emerges out of a playfulness that is metaphysical, and a lack of political commitment. Said is talking here categorically about intellectual responsibility, about a conscious effort towards a paradigm shift in terms of the theoretical mapping of geography, history, fiction or philosophy.

The emergence out of this 'rhetoric of blame' definitely requires a counter-hegemonic pressure that would ably overcome the erstwhile dominant imperialist discourse of the colonialists. However, Said's point is somewhat more complex than is immediately evident. What he is soliciting from the intellectuals of the Third World, the imperialized

nations, is a kind of resistance that cannot be conflated with opposition. Opposition is frontal, violent, and inimical in its import. This, according to Said, is somewhat inhibitive in terms of an exchange of dialogue, in arriving at the discussion table. Opposition locates political consciousness in terms of a binary relationship which is too limited for the mobilisation of resistance. Resistance is a way of writing back; of appropriating the language and discursive literary forms of the colonizer and construct a different cultural reality out of it. This is what Said means by contrapuntal reading—a secular means of resistance and interpretation, which comes out of the clutches of xenophobic national consciousness and the rhetoric of blame to create an atmosphere of exchange and interaction. It would be topical to note here that Said has always expressed a deep scepticism about nationalism as a means of cultural resistance (unless, of course, it is specifically anti-imperialist), because it always runs the risk of developing into extremist chauvinism and nativism. A typical example of this is the celebration of Blackness by the negritude writers which ultimately traps them in a blind alley of self-glorification.

It is Said's worldliness that makes him realize the necessity of political dialogue in order that a reconstruction of post-colonial identities might be possible. An overt racializing of the problematic of cultural oppression would only diminish the possibilities of true liberation and it is the intellectual's prerogative to negotiate a re-location of cultural identities by continuously writing back to the canon.

Culture and Imperialism: A Writing Back

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* is a fine example of such writing back to the empire, what he calls the 'voyage in', to rupture the Western literary discourse and discover sites of power implicit within it. He deconstructs canonical texts to show how culture consciously or unconsciously participated in the imperial project but was somehow excused from it. He explores fiction, racial theory, political science, travel writing and discovers how casual statements or arbitrary assertions are accepted as universally valid truths and consequently used to consolidate power/knowledge equations between the ruler and the ruled. He closely examines such texts as Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King*, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* or Albert Camus' *L'Etranger* to discover how colonialist discourse has been comprehensively validated in such texts, sometimes innocently and unconsciously, and sometimes deliberately.

The chief motive of *Culture and Imperialism* was to initiate a process of contrapuntal reading to reveal the overlapping areas of imperialism and resistance. The book delineates a history of resistance against empire, and this idea of resistance becomes the central thematic thrust of the book. His thesis enumerates that since the inception of colonialism there was an implicit resistance to it, but that this culture of resistance was never properly explored because of discursive domination. Resistance to domination is

automatic, and a total history of this dialectical relationship needs to be excavated in order that there might be a proper de-contextualization and a consequent re-contextualization of the native with his corresponding history and location.

It is interesting to see how this entire debate about the dynamics of domination can be re-located to the present problematic of location and the politics of space in today's world, and the entire debate about the First World and the Third World. Said's entire enterprise as a Third-World intellectual is to address this politics of space, and he uses these metaphors of imperialism and culture as correlatives that place the present problem of representation within a cultural continuum. He sees this as the intellectual's duty to address these problems and try and negotiate a neutral space (as far as is possible) where the process of re-contextualization and re-location can begin. The evils of hegemony can be countered by the extremities of nationalism, but that could only lead to other minor, but nonetheless, effective micro-hegemonies. Further, the tool of nationalism would also, inevitably, widen the gap between the First and the Third Worlds. Edward Said locates himself within the metropolitan academy in the First World to problematize resistance (as no unique solution is possible), as also to try and open up a space for agenda based discussions that can at least address the problems of cultural and representational discourse if not solve them. His writings have influenced many, and a future generation of comprehensive intellectual presence has been nurtured by this culture of resistance that he, in a way, initiated. Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha are two such influential Third- World intellectuals who have successfully problematized the politics of representation in the First World, and I shall discuss some of their major concerns in the next chapters.

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62. Said refers to these three Arab intellectuals at different points in his work. Ali Mazrui was a Kenyan-Muslim professor of political science at the University of Michigan. In 1968 he was commissioned by the BBC for a television documentary called *The Africans*. Said insists that due to several political reasons, one of them being that Mazrui showed the Muslims in a good light and that he critiqued the Western project of imperialism, the documentary was severely criticized by the establishment and consequently taken off air. Dr. Hussein Fawzi was a scientist, and chairman of the Egyptian Scientific Academy. He was famous for a series of writings called the 'Sindbad Series' in which he presented lively accounts of his travels around the world. In these sporadic writings he analysed the culture patterns and clashes between the Orient and the West. Milad Hanna, the winner of the 1998 UNESCO Simon Bolivar prize, is an engineer by profession and an Egyptian intellectual. He has also consistently tried to bridge the gap between the cultures of the East and the West, and written extensively about the concept of the 'other'. See Milad Hanna, *Acceptance of the*

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CHAPTER THREE

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK: A MOVEMENT BEYOND DISCIPLINES

The Problem of Discipline

In his book *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practises, Politics*, the author Bart Moore-Gilbert begins his chapter on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak with a sentence that typically expresses the apprehensive praise that all of Spivak's readers around the globe seem to have about her work:

The work of the US-based critic of Indian origin Gayatri Spivak constitutes one of the most substantial and innovative contributions to postcolonial forms of cultural analysis, though her essays are also some of the most elusive, complex and challenging in the field.¹

The words 'substantial' and 'innovative' are qualified by the three adjectives that follow—'elusive', 'complex' and 'challenging', all of which bring out the difficulty of Spivak's readers as they try to manoeuvre through her writings. They are, I feel, euphemistic expressions of anxiety rather than genuine compliments born of trust and respect for a fellow academic.

The fundamental difficulty that most readers face in approaching Spivak is methodological. It is difficult, at times

impossible, to locate Spivak within a school of critical or philosophical development as she refuses to be assimilated within the boundary of any particular discipline. She has categorically refused to be included within particular schools of thought or philosophical approaches and has been insistent about the ad-hoc nature of her writings. Although her readers and critics alike have tried to locate her as a Marxist, a feminist, or a deconstructionist at different times—she has consciously eluded all such labels and maintained that her work is ‘fragmentary and anecdotal’ in nature.²

Such amorphous writing makes it difficult for readers to attempt a critique of her work from a specific position. She eludes disciplinary boundaries only to switch from one to the other, and this informality of style is a difficult turn to negotiate. This is one of the primary reasons for her readers to believe that she is opaque and difficult, as she is never ready to give the meaning away. Obviously, the discerning reader immediately understands this to be a well-founded strategy on her part to frustrate essentialist agency of the First World—something she deliberately and continuously cautions her readers about. Her refusal to be ‘named’ is her refusal to be essentialized, and this incessant disciplinary vacillation is a characteristically well-guarded project to be heard and yet not be eaten up by metropolitan power-knowledge strategies so prevalent in the Western academy.

Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak: Similarities and Departures

On the face of it Gayatri Spivak's strategy might seem to be the designed on the same lines as the strategy of 'amateurism' propagated by Edward Said.³ But, I suppose, there is a major difference in the basic agenda of Said and Spivak. Through his idea of amateurism Said meant to move towards a 'worldliness'⁴—a personal and active engagement with the politics of the world around him. Criticism for him exceeded an academic agenda or simply a critique of Orientalist hegemony; it was the political practice of an activist, a function of the public intellectual:

Criticism for Said is personal, active, entwined with the world, implicated in its process of implementation, and committed to the almost disappearing notion that the intellectual, through the operation of the oppositional, critical spirit, can reveal hypocrisy, uncover the false, prepare the ground for change...It is undoubtedly this worldliness which drives his own theory of the interactive operations of text, reader and critic.⁵

Although Spivak has always admired and acknowledged Said as a key presence in the field of postcolonial studies, we cannot say she has emulated or followed him. Whereas the ad-hoc nature of her work is akin to Said's concept of 'amateurism', I must say there is little similarity otherwise in their respective manners of addressing the problem of postcolonial studies. Said has a well-defined political

presence in his oppositional role as a public intellectual—his continuous attempts to define his position, torn between his location in the academia in the First World and his engagement with the issues of representation of the Third World. Spivak, on the other hand, has preferred an obtuse and ambiguous presence. Her location has remained a problem and she has herself wanted it that way:

I have two faces. I am not in exile. I am not a migrant. I am a green-card-carrying critic of neo-colonialism in the United States. It's a difficult position to negotiate, because I will not marginalize myself in the United States in order to get sympathy from people who are genuinely marginalized.⁶

Moreover, the difficulty in penetrating her work, the use of terminology and jargon sometimes invented by herself, and the continuous shifts and crossovers in her writings have made it impossible for her to play the role of the 'amateur' public intellectual. She is not exactly writing for the public, nor are her works accessible (in terms of comprehension) to an extra-academic readership, so that she has remained more of a self-centred albeit dominating presence, elitist and removed. This, however, has got nothing to do with the subject matter of her work, where she is sometimes addressing intricate problems that relate directly to the question of the subaltern. I shall come back to this part of my argument later in this chapter and elsewhere as well, when I discuss Spivak's associations with the Subaltern Studies collective. There are other marked differences in terms of

agenda, strategy and technique between Said and Spivak that are worth taking a note of.

Spivak the Critic: Strategic Interventionism

Gayatri Spivak's stance as a critic is essentially interventionist in nature. There is implicit in her manner of argument a strategy of disruption, even combat. Her attacks on Western historiography and cultural processes are abrupt and deconstructive that challenge hegemony by unsettling it or approaching it from an unpredictable angle. She discovers gaps in the texts (or aporia) or deliberate catachrestic misreadings which she uses as sites to found her interventionist critique. She travels between disciplines—once commenting on French feminism⁷ and the next moment trying to discover the interconnectedness between events happening on Wall Street, in European or US universities and shopping malls, and in the factories or villages in the Third World.⁸ Suspicious of the conventional kinds of academic narrative, Spivak prefers the deconstructive strategy of 'persistent critique' which has a disruptive, fragmentary quality of immediacy and surprise.

This is in sharp contrast to Said's technique of a totalizing vision, seeing the strategy of colonialism and discursive hegemony in perspective. Said attempts at system-building in texts such as *Orientalism*, to follow the entire trajectory toward the building up of imperial culture, to reveal the techniques of subterranean dominance in the project of colonialism. Said searches through the disciplinary apparatus of history, geography, sociology, travel-writing,

literature to understand and problematize the essentialist project of dominance and to bring out the structures of power-knowledge that constitute the core of Western strategy. Thus, while Said looks into the architecture of discursive socio-cultural apparatus, Spivak sneaks into dead-ends to subvert the logic of dominant Western rhetoric.

The Thematic Aspect

At the thematic level there are major differences in the approaches of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Said, in books such as *Orientalism* or *Culture and Imperialism*, looks into the processes of discursive domination, which have helped the project of Western cultural hegemony. He has tried to locate the centres of power that have categorically sustained the ethos of Western domination through the creation of systematically biased paradigms of knowledge, and political and academic practices. His dependence on Foucauldian systems of analysis have given birth to an occasional despondency and frustration at not being able to shirk off these dominant socio-cultural patterns of subjugation. Said's emergence as a public intellectual is, in a way, a desperate attempt to shirk off Foucauldian pessimism in the interests of social and political change, especially in the Third World.

As I have already stated, Spivak is less of an activist than an academic, and thus she would not have taken up activism as her method of protest, although she might have respect for Said and his enterprise. Spivak's method of disrupting hegemonic dominance is markedly different. She

approaches it the other way round, through the process of counter-discourse. The ruptures she attempts are through her associations with the Subaltern Studies collective⁹ in India and elsewhere, or her call for an exchange between metropolitan and decolonized feminisms in a collaborative work with the Algerian feminist Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas,¹⁰ or her translation of the Bengali fiction of Mahasweta Devi.¹¹ It is through such abrupt interventions that Spivak attempts a disruption of discursive practice.

It is through these interventions in the hegemonic apparatus that Spivak addresses the implicit Western agenda of assimilationist identitarianism. She opens up the debate about heterogeneity, something that Said seems to have neglected. In making forays into subaltern historiography, writing on international division of labour or addressing questions on the gendered subject, she harps on the 'persistent recognition of heterogeneity' of cultural and economic formations that are neglected in talking about the postcolonial subject.¹² She is interested in individual subject-positions, each having its own identity, and each capable of creating a deconstructive rupture in the homogeneity of Western discursive constructs. In such almost amateur attempts at intervention, I find much in common between Spivak and Antonio Gramsci (who was also known for abruptly attacking forms of hegemony through sporadic and interventionist writings).¹³

The Pedagogical Aspect

The politics of pedagogy is one other area on which Spivak has thought and written extensively. She sees in the workings of the Western academy a tendency to homogenize the cultural formations of the Third World and address the entire problem of its representation as a monolithic and unitary construct. Although Said has cursorily addressed this problem of Western pedagogy he was never too keen to problematize the politics involved in this kind of representation.

Spivak undertakes the problematization of Western pedagogy most of all in her writings on the Third-World woman. There are multiple anxieties in Spivak when she comes to address the problematic of the location of this gendered subject. The debate is indeed interesting in terms of its inclusivity. Who is Spivak talking about? Is it the Third-World subaltern woman—the margin of margins? Is it the educated, middle class, upper-caste woman in a metropolitan city in the Third World? Is it the Third-World woman intellectual located in the First world? And how does one address the locational dynamic of any one of these with the pedagogical tools of First-World feminism? This is precisely where Spivak opens up the heterogeneity debate. Who addresses whom? What right has any one of them to address the problem of the other?

I shall come back to these questions about Western feminism in a moment. Talking about pedagogy, Spivak continues her argument about facilitating a trans-national

study of culture. This would constitute a re-working of the syllabus in metropolitan First-World universities in terms of a more heterogeneous and a less discursive model. She suggests measures like the phasing out of single-author studies, broadening the range of language requirements to include non-Western languages, a greater attention to non-literary media and forms of popular culture and integrating critical theory more effectively into postcolonial studies. This, according to her, is a way of effectively disrupting the traditional assumptions of disciplinary formations in terms of their ideological framing. In terms of her location, such a continuous questioning of Western pedagogical paradigms has important implications. As the Third-World intellectual located in the First World, such disruptive technique is a singular way of representing herself at least (she has always been ambiguous while responding to questions about whether she represents the Third World, the Third-World woman, the gendered subaltern etc.) within the discursive set-up of the Western academy. This is, of course, singularly interesting. Her unfailing agenda of attacking the assimilationist politics of the Western academy through a consistent reminder of heterogeneity is a way of representing herself, consolidating her location; on the other hand, this consistent thwarting of any obvious, essential identity is a way of frustrating the identitarianism that is so symptomatic of the hegemonic nature of the First World.

However, this continuous reminder about the essentialist techniques of disciplinarity within the Western academy and its socio-political formations does not predicate

for Spivak a rejection of their theoretical tools. On the other hand, she is always trying to work towards a 'negotiation' between parameters of dominance and subjugation through which to reveal the implicit cultural politics of postcoloniality. Singularly aware of the pluralistic nature of postmodern cultural productions, Spivak argues against a sanitized, uncontaminated space inhabited by the postcolonial critic by virtue of his or her firsthand experience or cultural origin, from which he or she can address the issues of class, race or gender. Rather, a dynamic of exchange, by no means uncritical of Western cultural institutions, is something that Spivak encourages the postcolonial intellectual to undertake. She finds such an approach logically sound as it engenders a participation in the self-same techniques of Western cultural hegemony that have been used for dominance and subjection, and subverting or fracturing them from inside.¹⁴ This enterprise of postcolonial counter-discourse is deliberately disruptive and becomes a 'persistent critique of what you cannot not want'.¹⁵

Spivak is perhaps incited by this same tendency of ad-hoc disruption when she attempts a reading of Mahasweta Devi's short story *Stanadayini* using the critical techniques of the Western academy, thereby attempting a new representation of the subaltern from the subject-position of the teacher/reader.¹⁶ It is her way of unsettling the dominant 'radical' reader in the Anglo-US academy who tends to homogenize the Third World and sees all literary and

theoretical attempts of the Third World in the context of nationalism and ethnicity¹⁷:

The reading of *Stanadayini* presented here, assigning the subject-position to the teacher/reader, can be helpful in combating a certain tendency in literary pedagogy that still shapes, by remote control, the élite in the most prestigious Indian educational institutions: the so-called radical teaching of literary criticism and literature in the United States and perhaps also in Britain.¹⁸

She adopts this radical mode of reading the Third-World text and by opening the text to multiple élite readings disrupts the supposed pedagogic superiority of the élite academic. But just before she extends such readings her sharp and acerbic wit interrupts parenthetically:

(Any reader nervous about the fact that Mahasweta Devi has probably not read much of the material critically illuminated by her text should stop here.)¹⁹

Then she analyses Mahasweta Devi's story from three élite critical approaches—namely, those of Marxist Feminism, Liberal Feminism, and Theory of Woman's Body, showing how *Stanadayini* (and, by extension, any other subaltern text) might be read in terms of complex critical discursive formations adhered to by the Western academy.²⁰ It is the kind of serio-ironic mode of writing that she adopts which is disruptive and subversive. This is atypical example of what Spivak describes as 'reconstellation'—a manoeuvre by which a text is taken out of its proper context and put

through alien modes of analysis. Through her analysis of *Stanadayini* Spivak reveals the limitations and 'absences' within Western theoretical discourse.

One would not fail to note, however, that such readings of a Third-World text in the light of metropolitan culture theory is Spivak's singular way of keeping the question of representation alive in the academy. The use of sophisticated theory is deliberate. It immediately frustrates the kind of identitarianism so characteristic of Western pedagogy. Nobody can call her 'subaltern'—she uses all the tools of postmodern criticism; neither is she the Third-World elite—she lives in New York and teaches at Columbia University and wields considerable power within the academy;²¹ and she is not comfortably First-World either as her continuous critiques of Western academic policy suggest. She consistently defines herself or her location by parameters of ambiguity, newness of approach, and role-playing. As she has already pointed out, 'I will not marginalize myself...'.²²

Deconstruction—A Tactical Ploy

Gayatri Spivak's agenda of critiquing Western pedagogical discourse is deeply embedded within the politics of disruption. The anxiety of representation (who represents whom?) has been, by all means, the central problematic of the Third-World intellectual in the First. The necessity for opening up or creating a space for debate predicated an invention of techniques of reading that must violate the systems of binaries used by the dominant discourse to

legitimize its power. It was essential to invent a form of ideology-critique that would reveal the implicit assumptions, strategies and rhetoric of the historical, political or theoretical narrative of the Western academy.

Spivak's recourse to deconstruction was thus a deliberate and perhaps inevitable choice—it being a form of 'negative critique' that would instantly corrupt the discursive logic of canonical techniques of reading. She attempts a tangential kind of reading so that sub-plots or minor characters or implicit motifs are revealed in an alternative light—a touch-and-go method that reveals the essentialist, racialized nature of Western conceptual frameworks. Spivak's deconstructive strategy of reading engenders an attempt to locate 'interruptions' or 'discontinuities' within a text, the gaps through which her kind of ad-hoc criticism makes way. It is fragmentary but disturbing—a way of multiplying possibilities of interpretations to show the essentially pluralistic nature of experience. This pluralism is deliberately, or sometimes even unconsciously, hidden and one of the chief agenda of the postcolonial critique is a (re)discovery of these pluralisms through disruptive interventions into the text. Spivak points out how even radical critical schools in the West sometimes fail to locate such discontinuities and are hence innocently essentialized. It will be interesting to note Spivak's reaction to Western feminism (particularly to the work of Julia Kristeva) in this context, but we shall come back to that a little later.

Spivak's attempt at such pluralistic re-negotiations of Western modes of essentialist readings is brought forth in such techniques as 'reconstellation' and 'catachresis'. Reconstellation initiates a subversive manoeuvre by which a whole text is de-contextualized and then re-contextualized within alien arguments. The entire agenda is to unravel the aporia or 'absences' that constitute 'reading' within discursive frameworks—and this Spivak sees as one of the primary enterprises of the teacher of literature:

The teacher of literature, because of her institutional subject-position, can and must 're-constellate' the text to draw out its use. She can and must wrench it out of its proper context and put it within alien arguments.²³

Catachresis is less complicated or elaborate. It is a local, tactical manoeuvre which constitutes an abrupt appropriation of certain ideas and rhetorical strategies from within a particular narrative and using them to open up new arenas of meaning. For example, Spivak appropriates Gramsci's concept of the 'subaltern' and uses it in radical ways to deconstruct hegemonic formations. Spivak uses these disruptive negativities inherent in deconstruction as a kind of tangential or guerrilla mode of engagement, thereby also re-affirming her own radicalized subject-position within the academy.

However, it is not that Spivak is only interested in the negative aspects of deconstruction. It also has an affirmative value in its complicity with the liberationist moves of

marginalized social constituencies. She insists on deconstruction's 'enabling violence' through which it subverts the systems of binaries that legitimize the power/knowledge modes of dominance of the Western discourses. She warns however that a mere reversal or subversion of dominance would only initiate another supplementary movement towards appropriation. The logic of counter-hegemony would easily be eaten up by the *aufhebung* of more powerful hegemony—and this would constitute remaining within the paradigm defined and demarcated by the opponent. Reversal must necessarily involve displacement to avoid being cancelled out by the powerful opponent. Spivak suggests a politics of reading that would involve an opening up of the text toward newer horizons, 'so that it can be of use without excuse'.²⁴ This is precisely the way through which deconstruction enables a kind of negotiation 'producing a new politics through critical intimacy'.²⁵

In spite of (or because of) the apparent denseness of her writing one must say that Spivak has indeed promised to reach her audience/readers through a unique deconstructive mode of ideology-critique. This kind of deconstruction is affirmative in nature as it tries to establish a kind of dialogue, a sense of intimacy with the audience—an intimacy that provokes a kind of understanding beyond the hegemonic constructions of the power/knowledge equation, something that flows through a subterranean path and touches like electric current or an impulse. Time and again, while talking about affirmative deconstruction, Spivak

emphasizes her role as a teacher or a public speaker. She insists on how, while addressing a class or a group, the audience is generally taken as a collection of selves. But such an assumption betrays the inevitable difference in the mental theatre of each one of them, something that Spivak calls 'their intimate and inaccessible alterity'.²⁶ Such a blatant generalization marks the limits of teaching or talking and opens up the text toward a radical uncertainty. This uncertainty enables the beginning of a dialogue between the speaker/author and the listener/reader and this consciousness of the immense plurality or heterogeneity helps in the 'construction' of meaning. Very basic questions of what it is to write, or teach, or learn, or communicate become politically relevant in course of such dialogue: 'What is it to assume that one already knows the meaning of the words "something is taught by me and something is learned by others"?'²⁷

The grounding of such uncertainty within the academic institution automatically releases the tropes for a critique of ideology which is one basic task of deconstruction (affirmative) within the academy. And this deconstruction is 'unexcusing, unaccusing, attentive'²⁸ and is able to dismantle ideological tropes according to situational needs.

Feminism: A Differential Turn

Indeed, feminism has played a very important role in the kind of disruptive intrusions that Gayatri Spivak has attempted into Western discursive paradigms. Feminism, for her, has constituted a primary method of protest against

assimilationist techniques and essentialist enterprises of the West. However, it would be rather simplistic to call Spivak a feminist. While theoretically she has depended on feminism for discovering a voice for the woman, her extensive writings on feminism have, more often than not, problematized 'feminism' as a means of protest. What has ultimately emerged out of her extensive forays into feminism, to locate an alternative voice of protest, is the kind of pluralism that is inevitable in order that a true rupture of hegemonic patriarchy is possible.

One must notice how Spivak consistently brings the Third World into contention while discussing the possibilities of feminism. She is talking about marginality and the woman. The bringing in of the Third World further problematizes the debate. What about the Third-World woman—the gendered subaltern, the margin of margin! This is how she opens up the pluralisms inherent and implicit within feminism as a site for protest. Who speaks for whom? It is through this basic question that Spivak explores the very problematic subject-position of the woman, both in social history and literature. The individual subject-position qualified by class, location, economy, race, is continuously shifting, and it is the negotiation of the many possibilities and shifts that is, or should be, the enterprise of feminism. What is interesting here is that while introducing the Third-World, gendered subaltern into the debate on feminism Spivak very intelligently incites the question of representation and representability once again. This is a subtle reminder of the importance of the Third-World

intellectual, that too a woman, in this entire question of speaking up. The subaltern cannot speak. *She* might speak for them! Of course this is gross over-simplification, but one cannot completely do away with such an argument, what with her protracted and circuitous debate about the representational anxiety of Jashoda, the gendered subaltern Third-World protagonist of Mahasweta Devi's short story *Stanadayini*. We have seen how Spivak has shown the gaps in understanding or perhaps a strategic incomprehension in much of West-European feminism while she puts *Stanadayini* through Western feminist theorizations, and thus re-emphasizes the presence of Third-World women like her in the First World to critique such theorizations.²⁹ This is one of the ways in which she sees the mobilization of strategy by initiating an attack against theory, in this case, feminism. She sees strategy as persistently critiquing the theoretical. It is a concept-metaphor whose major difference with 'theory' is that there is a specificity from which it emerges, and unlike theory its not 'disinterested and universal'.³⁰ This is affirmative deconstruction at work which gives birth to many feminisms, and opens up the entire woman question to multiple pluralisms. The ad-hoc interventionist kind of critiquing, which is so symptomatic of Spivak, is her way of discovering the aporia within institutional feminism, thereby confirming the voice or presence of the gendered subaltern. This, it seems, is her primary agenda and thus she is more of an alternative kind of presence within the politics of the woman question, who uses deconstruction as a tool to upset academic essentialism. This is why I insist she is not a

feminist in the manner in which, let us say, Julia Kristeva is a feminist.

Kristeva's Feminism: Avant Garde and Benevolent

In at least two of her essays Gayatri Spivak comments in detail about French feminism, and to put it simply, her reaction towards it is mixed.³¹ But the one thing that can be said for certain about Spivak's views on the French feminists is that she definitely has strong issues with Julia Kristeva and her brand of feminism. Very few have put their opinion about a fellow critic so bluntly on the printed page: 'I'm repelled by Kristeva's politics'.³²

On the face of it, however, the not so discerning reader would be at a loss to grasp the reason for such a strong distaste. Kristeva's theory is less about 'femininity' or 'femaleness' and more about marginality, subversion and dissidence. She refuses to define or represent the woman—apparently the same kind of disruptive politics that Spivak is advocating. By 'woman' she understands 'that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies'.³³ Spivak is also generally speaking about marginality and representability of the woman in her writings. Like Spivak, Kristeva is also anti-essentialist in her approach, and talks of the feminine more in terms of positionality than in terms of essences. The intriguing question then is why Spivak launches such an invective against Kristeva.

The answer lies in the fact that Spivak primarily locates herself as the postcolonial intellectual one of whose

chief concerns remains the Third World. She sees Kristeva's critique as embedded essentially in Western cultural practice. This she discovers in much of Kristeva's work, but most predominantly in her book *About Chinese Women*.³⁴ The solution that Kristeva offers to her French female comrades against male essentialist practice in the beginning of her book is too sophisticated and theoretical:

We cannot get access to the temporal scene, i.e., to political affairs, except by identifying with the values considered to be masculine (dominance, superego, the endorsed communicative word that institutes stable social exchange)...[We must] achieve this identification in order to escape a smug polymorphism where it is so easy and comfortable for a woman here to remain; and by this identification [we must] gain entry to social experience.³⁵

Spivak is livid at Kristeva's avant garde politics and systematic sophistication, something that she sees as the natural tendency of the First-World feminist, and who she thinks 'must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman'.³⁶ The solution that Kristeva offers against male essentialist politics certainly cannot be offered to the nameless, faceless, marginal women of the Third World, and this is what frustrates Spivak:

This is a set of directives for class- and race-privileged literary women who can ignore the seductive effects of identifying with the values of the other side while rejecting their validity; and, by

identifying the political with the temporal and linguistic, ignore as well the micrology of political economy.³⁷

Spivak goes on to note how Kristeva's study of the Chinese women makes no attempt at dissolving the discursive paradigms so symptomatic of Orientalism. Her method of looking at the Chinese women is self-centred and never attempts to transcend the I-Thou (West-East) barriers. Spivak is also irritated at how Kristeva's *speculation* about traces of matrilineal societies in ancient China becomes a historical *fact* a few pages later. Thus Kristeva is automatically succumbing to the Orientalist tropes of monolithic historicity and cannot reach the pluralism so central to postcolonial historical constructions. Spivak accuses her of a 'wishful use of history that brings Kristeva close to the Eighteenth century Sinophiles whom she criticizes...'.³⁸ Spivak discovers in the entire text stupendous generalizations about Chinese writing and the typical Western imperialist habit of valorising the past glory of the colonized nation at the expense of ridiculing the present:

Kristeva prefers [the] misty past to the present. Most of her account of the latter is dates, legislations, important people, important places. There is no transition between the two accounts. Reflecting a broader Western cultural practice, the "classical" East is studied with primitivistic reverence, even as the "contemporary" East is treated with realpolitikal contempt.³⁹

Spivak also accuses Kristeva of gathering most of her information from flimsy or sparse accounts, none of which might be used for comprehensive research work.⁴⁰

Thus, while admitting Kristeva's wide knowledge and theoretical capabilities, Spivak finds in her work a pervading West Europeanism, a sense of being privileged as the Occidental woman, someone who speaks for a generalized West, and when examining the East, doing it from a certain discursive distance. Spivak does not forget to jibe at her Bulgarian past which is 'not even a shadow under the harsh light of the Parisian voice'.⁴¹ Compared to this is her own ideological position as the Third-World intellectual working in a First-World university and trying to grapple with the heterogeneity of a complex locational dynamic. Indeed it is challenging to negotiate the pluralism of her location—decolonized Third-World woman trying to rupture the discursive paradigms of the Western metropolitan university. No wonder she considers herself more honest than Kristeva when she tries to look into the representability of the gendered subaltern.⁴²

Hélène Cixous: Emancipatory Pluralism

Spivak is much happier in the company of Hélène Cixous than in that of Kristeva. Most of her praise for French feminism is reserved for the likes of Cixous or Monique Wittig and the reason for this is not difficult to discover.⁴³ Their technique, which Spivak describes as 'familiar-essay-cum-prose-poem' is similar to the kind of interventionist critique that Spivak attempts.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note how

Cixous' technique is markedly different from Kristeva's, although their agenda is similar. Whereas there is a clear discursive distance between Kristeva's high French feminism and the Chinese women, for example, who she talks about, Cixous' approach is less theoretically hegemonic, although not theoretically weak. There is a kind of metaphoric transcendental style of reading in Cixous primarily due to the fact that she approaches theory as a writer, and not as a philosopher, and this is the chief reason for Spivak's being so attracted to her.⁴⁵

Cixous has thought extensively about locating the woman out of the system of binary oppositions laid down by patriarchy. Her belief in poetry (and not philosophy) incites her to search for a metaphorical kind of motherhood that connects two women beyond the reaches of patriarchal hegemony:

It is necessary and sufficient that the best be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was 'born' to her.⁴⁶

This reads more like a poetic than a theoretical text—born of a transcendental need of one woman to be able to touch another. Such deliberate abstraction, almost a going against the precision of theory, has helped her to evade essentialisms. The systematic use of academic tools inevitably starts a movement toward a conscious creation of concept-metaphors thereby reducing movement into theory. The figure of the mother that Cixous evokes in her writings

need not necessarily have the experience of being a mother, but be infused by a general sense of mothering. Thus the woman-woman relationship is established arbitrarily and pervasively, and this can be clearly distinguished from being motherly or maternal—concept-metaphors that are inevitably qualified by hegemonic knowledge systems. It is through such a tactical manoeuvre that a relationship between any two women might be forged, and Spivak immediately appropriates this technique to establish a relationship between the metropolitan woman (Third-World or otherwise) and the gendered subaltern. No wonder, it is through Cixous' fluid dynamic of reaching out to the other woman that Spivak tries to assume a responsibility for, and try a representation of Jashoda in Mahasweta Devi's short story *Stanadayini*. She sees in Cixous' strategy 'an amazing formulation of responsibility' that she tries to emulate through the process of her translation of the story.⁴⁷ Spivak continuously emphasizes the dispersed and differential identity that Cixous gives to the woman, an identity beyond the definitive implications of post-structuralist nominalism or paleonymy. This is also one kind of affirmative deconstruction that tries to raise the questions of pluralism and heterogeneity.

Woman and the Question of History

Woman un-thinks or squanders the unifying ordering history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into the practice of a single battlefield. In woman, the history of all women

blends together with her personal history, national and international history.⁴⁸

Here is the disruptive function of the woman in history—the pluralization, the heterogenization of agenda, a deliberate dis-ordering of history. The entrance of the woman in history is a questioning of the consensual paradigms of historical representation in terms of generalization, homogeneity, singularity et cetera. The woman in question is the ‘fighter’ woman—one who demands a well-defined subject-position that has all the necessary implications of pluralism as well as individuality. And the kind of responsibility that Spivak talks about involves a subsuming of multiple agenda into the woman question—that of class struggle, that of the subaltern Third World, or that of the international division of labour. All of these are individual questions in themselves and are also summarily linked with the woman question. The assumption of this responsibility entails a direct confrontation with the discursive paradigms of institutional historiography and a critique of intention. Spivak sees feminism as a consistent disruption of the strategic exclusions in discursive historiography—the blatant (or subtle) playing out of power relations in the writing of history within the institution. By being vigilant and attentive feminism can productively disrupt and displace this writing of history, successfully landing the narrative in an undecidability. This feminism, Spivak says, is ‘a persistent critique of history’.⁴⁹ The kind of feminism that Cixous attempts, something that Spivak finds inviting and powerful, is this search for a heterogeneous historicity through the

disruption of definitives. The kind of history that they are attempting is this blend of personal, national and international history that is indeed ambitious and arbitrary, and in a sense poetic. The storying of history becomes an important tool here. It is almost a kind of New Historicist anecdotal mode that Spivak attempts in her critique. We cannot miss her strategy behind choosing the Jashoda narrative. Not only does she talk about the socio-literary aspect of the narrative, but also gives it a historical identity with her minute analysis of the socio-historical mores explored in the story. It thus becomes both an examination of the Third-World marginal woman, as well as an attempt at a storying of history—thereby dismantling the monolithic pattern of Western history. This is how Spivak attempts to address the strategic exclusions so symptomatic of hegemonic reading, thereby clearing a space of ‘undecidability’ within the fixed discursive pattern, and creating fissures of discontinuity.⁵⁰ Thus the bulk of Spivak’s feminist project is really a part of her strategy of affirmative deconstruction which is really a method of disruption and anti-essentialism. The Third-World woman intellectual is still addressing the problematic of positionality. In due course she is also maintaining her position of ambiguity, an imperative perhaps to develop a critique of hegemonic historiography from her rather complex location.

Deconstructive Feminism: Spivak's Unique Use of Theory

The reader of Gayatri Spivak cannot but notice that she has used the strategies offered by deconstruction very cleverly in her theorizations on feminism. From her Third-World perspective (at least in the sense in which she writes about the Third World), from her perspective of trying to address the agenda of the gendered subaltern, Spivak has used deconstruction to very good effect. In fact, while she is speaking about the issues of feminism and the question of the woman, the way she uses deconstruction as a tool of intervention is unique, and markedly different from the general trends of American deconstructive practice.

In an essay where she tries to execute a negotiation between feminism and deconstruction, she makes a very loaded claim at the very outset. Deconstruction, she insists, is not a politics that tends towards any kind of foundationalism. On the contrary, it is a critique of foundations, merely a tool (and not a fixed theoretical position) to be used to unsettle the claims of any foundational discursivity. Deconstruction, she says, is not about founding a politics; it is about making visible the gaps in other, more foundational political programs. Action is therefore not the ignoring of deconstruction, but an active attempt to transgress it. In a teasing parenthesis she adds a slightly tougher formulation and asks 'clarity-fetishists' to ignore it:

(...deconstruction does not aim at *praxis* or theoretical practice but lives in the persistent crisis or unease of the moment of *techne* or crafting.).⁵¹

The strategies of feminist intervention have generally looked to subvert the claims of patriarchy, to posit the claim of the 'woman' as the politics of selfhood. That is to say there was, generally, embedded within the claims of feminism the sense of binary opposition, a game of one against the other, where either side might win contingent upon the political space where the interaction occurs.

Spivak wants to address this question of the identity of the woman entirely out of the paradigm of any possibility of opposition or binary politics. Here she talks about the project undertaken by Jacqueline Rose, and how she has tried to do the same without the help of deconstruction.⁵² Rose goes the psychological way and tries to determine the subjectivity of the woman as the 'right to an impasse at the point of sexual identity'.⁵³ It is at this point of intense subjectivity that the woman claims her identity, where man/patriarchy is devoid of the parameters necessary to play the game. The impasse is a point of impossibility, the doldrums, a no-movement zone, where the woman catachrestically snatches a momentary identity without any 'nostalgia whatsoever for its possible or future integration into a norm'.⁵⁴

Spivak, no wonder, is all praise for Rose, for attempting such a unique moment of identity. But her own strategy, she says, is distinctly different. What Rose feels,

she writes, 'is a right to be claimed', she recognizes 'as a bind to be watched'.⁵⁵ The movement from the psychological to the deconstructive is from the one of assumption to the one of non-assumption of a position. Spivak has taken her postmodern dynamic of representation to an extreme point of sophistication, where even the assumption of a momentary positionality is seen with scepticism. Indeed, such a position is difficult to formulate within the set structure of a socio-theoretical framework—and this is where Spivak's politics can hardly be essentialized. Where is the moment of identity when the woman can be branded? Of course this is ultra-sophistication, but Spivak seems to have made her point. The focus on non-representation, the emphasis on reaching beyond the ontological seems to be the moot point of this politics.

The success or failure of this kind of politics can be debated, particularly when we are talking once again about the margin of margin—the location of the Third-World woman. Critics can see in such sophistication almost the same assumptions that Spivak herself had critiqued in Kristeva. What we need to understand, however, is that, in trying to avoid essentialist agenda Spivak is continuously making multiple and quantum shifts across the socio-theoretical framework. In this case she is talking purely from the perspective of the practitioner of deconstruction. She *is* theorizing, purely to make the possible patriarchal formations of the moment non-functional. By refusing to define either this 'woman' or the moment, Spivak is trying to resist the conception of deconstruction as a narrative. This is

where she tries to locate the difference between Jacqueline Rose and herself. The difference between them arises due to the fact that Rose understands deconstruction as '*only* a narrative of the fully dispersed and decentered subject'. Whereas Spivak is not suggesting a rigid opposition between structure and narrative, or morphology and narrative, she does want to insist that when deconstruction is understood only as a narrative it becomes the picture of 'an impossibility that cannot help *any* political position. Or perhaps it can, only too easily'.⁵⁶

This is not to say that Spivak has not herself seen deconstruction as a narrative. But there are interesting fractures (too many to be counted) embedded within that narrative. Spivak formulates how the human subject might see oneself or the 'story' of one's life as an 'instantiation of historical and psychosexual narratives that one can piece together'.⁵⁷ Seeing oneself as part of such a fractured narrative entails a kind of deidentification, claiming an identity that is pieced together from different discontinuous parts. This 'deidentification' is possible because the breaking up into fragments resists possible discursive formations within the narrative. The discursive formations that Spivak talks about are not, however, the doing of this subject, but those that are always/already present before the formation of the subject, and will remain as such even after his or her death. The subject is automatically inserted into what one might call a kind of a capsular narrative. It is not possible to escape this narrative; the only possibility that remains is one of deconstruction. Here Spivak aptly uses the example of the

trope of the mother-tongue: one is born into it and dies leaving it for the use of future generations. But all articulation automatically takes place within the semiotic system created by the mother-tongue:

We intend within it; we critique intentions within it; we play with it through signification as well as reference; and then we leave it, as much without intent, for the use of others after our deaths.⁵⁸

Thus, one's representation or identity is linked with a biography or history that is not completely one's own, much larger in scope and more capricious than one might immediately conceive. These then are narratives that always/already exist to qualify the subject-position of the individual. Spivak calls them *miraculating agencies*—'as if by a miracle one speaks as an agent of a culture or an agent of a sex or an agent of an ethnos et cetera...'.⁵⁹

The function of deconstruction then is to manoeuvre the subject towards a position (always contingent, ever vacillating) where these agents of miraculation cannot overwhelm him/her. Deconstruction works not from the outside, but from the inside, breaking the narrative of history or life or culture into differential pieces that tend towards a narrative but never becomes narrativized. It is a complex process of looking at the subject that always and inevitably travels towards the centre, but the mechanism of moving toward the centre is arbitrary and random. There is no 'real' decentered subject, as this process of subject formation is continuous and contingent, seen differentially, only at the

moment of formation/articulation. It is both ever-present and ever-evanescent, never quite achieving the quality of a located narrative that lends itself to a critique. In other words, it is neither essentialist, nor anti-essentialist. It is neither an essence, nor a school of thought. Deconstruction is merely 'a way of rereading'.⁶⁰

Coming back then to the difference between Jacqueline Rose and Gayatri Spivak regarding their conceptions about the politics of the woman. For Rose the project of psychoanalysis is crucial to feminism as it properly locates the difference (in sexual terms) between the man and the woman. The analysis of this basic ontological difference is not simplistic, defined within the set paradigms of male-ness or female-ness. It is about trying to define the woman in psychoanalytic terms—that is to say in terms of *her* cognitive male-ness or female-ness, her recognition of herself as the kind of (wo)man that she is. Rose clearly notes the reason why feminism must depend on psychoanalysis:

Feminism must depend on psychoanalysis because the issue of how individuals recognize themselves as male or female, the demand that they do so, seems to stand in such fundamental relation to the forms of inequality and subordination which it is feminism's objective to change.⁶¹

It is the last part of this statement that Spivak latches onto for her critique of Rose on the one hand, and to emphasize the necessity of her project of deconstruction on the other. The 'inequality' and 'subordination' which Rose feels is

feminism's objective to change engenders, according to Spivak, a shift of the project from epistemology or ontology to the ethicopolitical. It is then not only the sexual difference (between man and woman) that needs to be emphasized, argues Spivak, but it is also crucial to admit the irreducible difference between 'the subject (woman) of that epistemology, and the subject (feminist) of this ethicopolitics'.⁶²

It is at this point that Spivak intervenes with her deconstructive project, which she views as a project about the limits of epistemology: 'If one looks at the deconstructive morphology (rather than simply reading it as the narrative of the decentered subject), then one is obliged to notice that deconstruction has always been about the limits of epistemology.'⁶³ She thus visualizes the woman at the emancipating moment of emergence, woman as a 'catachresis'. At this catachrestic moment the woman is, even if it is for a differential moment, released from the clutches of a concept-metaphor and exists without a literal referent. She stands in for 'a concept that is the condition of conceptuality'.⁶⁴ Once again, deconstruction at its differential limit makes it possible to talk about the woman from without the politics of essentialism. What needs to be emphasized is that this entire logic of location (or non-location) of the woman takes place within the given socius or reference frame supplied by the discourse of history or culture or sexuality. There is neither opposition nor resentment, rather there is a symptom of complicity in not trying to formulate a strategy of difference that, for example,

Jacqueline Rose has done. This is the kind of affirmative deconstruction that Spivak prefers. In her re-reading of Derrida into the question of the woman Spivak has seen both the disciplines of deconstruction and feminism in a new light.

Spivak lucidly explains this strategy of reading in her example of Derrida's study of Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Ear of the Other*.⁶⁵ The fact that many of Nietzsche's texts were used by the Nazis for a consolidation of their ideals is sometimes excused by his readers as a situational or deliberate misreading. Derrida insists that these texts should not be excused for such misreadings. There must have been some implicit elements in his texts that allowed appropriation by the Nazis. That is to say, that all possible or probable or visible readings are integrated within the text so that the moments that lend themselves to the so-called misappropriation are understood in the text's own terms. It is in this manner that a politics of reading can be developed which opens up the text towards unknown possibilities of interpretation so that 'it can be of use without excuse'.⁶⁶ This is how Spivak sees the project of deconstruction as a process of negotiation, a map of (mis)readings produced by critical intimacy that open up unforeseen possibilities.

It needs to be noted in this context that it is at this point that Spivak herself is also re-writing the project of deconstruction on her own terms. There is a marked movement away from the general trend of American deconstruction—which is generally used to look at the

project of deconstruction as a *narrative* of the decentred subject. The success of the deconstructive strategy, she insists, lies not in its narrative structure but rather in its graphematic structure. She writes:

Deconstruction is not an exposure of error, nor a tabulation of error; logocentrism is not a pathology, nor is the metaphysical closure a prison to overthrow by violent means.⁶⁷

The adjective 'graphematic' comes from Derrida's analysis that writing is historically the structure that is supposed necessarily to operate in the presumed absence of its origin. That is to say that the natural development of a structure of narrative at the origin is undercut by this graphematic structure. It is akin to the act of 'writing' in the Barthesian sense, where there is the possibility of writing without the author.⁶⁸ Thus the graphematic structure develops in the limit of difference, and the originary discursive presence of the author becomes automatically irrelevant, although the act of writing continues. It thus becomes 'something that looks more like the mark of an absent presence' where writing takes place without the author, or differentially with many authors at the same time.⁶⁹

The general pattern of deconstruction in the American academy was more or less satisfied in the discovery of the decentred subject, or the supposed breakdown of the discursive logic of meaning at the point of origin. What Spivak tries to show, however, is that even if the subject of writing or the process of writing has been

successfully decentred by deconstructive practise, the development of the originary narrative could not be stalled. What she has done is therefore extremely interesting. She has posited her subject within the general pattern of the social, or historical, or political milieu—but catachrestically, at the differential moment. The limit of this difference becomes so miniscule that a narrative cannot be formulated at the origin. This is what she means by the graphematic structure that successfully undercuts the development of the origin.

What I intend to emphasize yet again is the strategy that Spivak has assumed. Never for once in her formulation of the deconstructive practice has she attempted to move out of the patterned humanist structure of epistemological or ontological development. At least apparently this seems to be the case. She has inhabited the structures and turned them inside out. This is what Derrida also seems to have said in his by now famous discourse:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take active aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it.⁷⁰

One might thus say with some assertiveness that Spivak has really gone beyond the school of American deconstruction. One might also daresay that Spivak has made use of the strategies of deconstruction much better than her American

colleagues and contemporaries. It is in the ever-evanescent moment of politics that she has formulated the death of originary narratives. Almost the same kind of politics was also used successfully by Homi Bhabha in his pronouncements on the predicament of the colonized subject, but more about that in the next chapter.

The Subaltern Historians: Re-Inforcing Patriarchy?

It is Spivak's easy fluidity between agenda and discipline that has brought her close to the Subaltern School of historians. Her deep concern for women and their location in history has also led her to a study of history as a discursive paradigm, and one of her main critiques against Julia Kristeva and for Hélène Cixous concerned her engagement with the pattern of hegemonic historiography. The hegemonic nature of the discipline was patterned by colonial and patriarchal knowledge formations and Spivak, as a postcolonial Third-World woman intellectual had to react.

One must note, however, that Spivak did not choose the most obvious method of protest—nationalism, something that was easy for her to hang on to and capitalize on from her First-World location. A scepticism about the efficiency of such ideas as the nation-state, nationhood, citizenship et cetera as modes of producing a methodology of protest had already pervaded the intelligentsia. Spivak notes how the political claims of 'nationhood, sovereignty, citizenship, secularism' are intrinsically catachrestic in nature.⁷¹ These concept-metaphors are not indigenous to the colonized, but written in the spaces of the colonizers themselves, and hence

are not the most potent metaphors of protest. Thus, movements that tried to counter hegemonic historiography rejected nationalism as a class-biased method, confined within parameters of elitism, something that would be immediately essentialized by Western knowledge systems. This is where the debate around essentialism and anti-essentialism, traditional and radical textuality started which saw the birth of the Subaltern Studies School.

Immediately, Spivak became much interested in the work of the Subaltern School of historians. They saw the moments of change in history not as moments of transformation, but as moments of confrontation between narratives and counter-narratives within the paradigm of domination and exploitation. In a bid to re-discover subaltern consciousness (a term very important for these historians), they tried to bring hegemonic historiography to crisis. Spivak is all praise for the group as it tries to show the deliberate cognitive failure of elite historiography in terms of textual representations of marginal history. In a New Historicist mode they examined the production of evidence, and produced myriad anecdotal evidence to counter discursive historical formations and subvert the logic of hegemony:

...[Ranajit] Guha seems to radicalize the historiography of colonial India through a combination of Soviet and Barthesian semiotic analysis. The discursivity (cognitive failure) of disinterested (successful and therefore true)

historiography is revealed. The Muse of History and counterinsurgency are shown to be complicit.⁷²

What is all the more interesting, however, is that the tactical tools they employ are all the strategic resources of elite humanism or bourgeois nationalism. They use and critique these tools at the same time. This is deconstructive practice and close to Spivak's heart. The subaltern historians talk about the marginal or the deprived in the same breath in which they reveal the discursivity of their approach, their apparent failure to reach out to the heterogeneity, diversity and complexity of the subaltern subject-position. This acknowledgement has the implications of an attempt to displace discursive fields and consistently refuse an objectification (and hence essentialization) of the subaltern question. A continuous vacillation between the use of sophisticated theoretical tools and a participation in the heterogeneity of the subaltern is the kind of affirmative deconstruction that they practice, and Spivak congratulates them for this unique enterprise. In her essay 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', Spivak has minutely observed and praised the manner in which these historians have tried to show subaltern consciousness as an emergent collective consciousness. In spite of finding their enterprise novel, Spivak's praise for the subaltern historians is however qualified. She has tried to locate some strategic gaps in their technique in terms of their use of the tropes of rumour or historiography as strategy.⁷³

But the one aspect on which she comes down most heavily is the group's treatment of women. It is here that Spivak discovers them as unable to strike a deconstructive mode, and revolve within the same discursive paradigms of bourgeois humanism. She discovers in them a collective (and perhaps) deliberate ignorance or oversight of the female subject. She is surprised at the fact that in a collective that speaks so much about the subject-position of the subaltern or the marginalised there is almost complete silence about the presence of the woman 'as crucial instrument' of representation or subjectivity.⁷⁴ The consistent neglect or exploitation of the sexed subaltern is rarely noticed and generally neglected by these historians. In this Spivak sees a failure of the group's subversive, deconstructive discourse, and the kind of exhilaration with which she had proceeded to be a part of this theoretical project dissipated with time, this being one of the major reasons.⁷⁵ Their intense examination of caste or class solidarity, the search for micro-histories of protest and resistance have only been negatively qualified by the total silence on the question of cruelty towards or neglect of the gendered subaltern. As Spivak comments in a tone of regret:

Male subaltern and historian are here united in the common assumption that the procreative sex is a species apart, scarcely if at all to be considered a part of civil society.⁷⁶

The Final Question: Negotiating Her Location

The question that crops up at the end of this discussion is how Spivak locates herself within this vast dynamic of negotiation and counter-negotiation, the acceptance or eschewal of positions staying within the bounds of the metropolitan university. As a matter of fact, there is little doubt about the power that people such as Spivak wield within the First-World university, and many are of the opinion that this is because of a cultivated politics of problematizing one's own location, in the choice of a counter-essentialist postcolonial subject-position. Arif Dirlik puts this interestingly:

Postcolonial intellectuals in their First World institutional location are ensconced in positions of power not only vis-à-vis the 'native' intellectuals back at home but also vis-à-vis their First world neighbours here. My neighbours in Farmville, Virginia, are no match in power for the highly paid, highly prestigious postcolonial intellectuals at Columbia, Princeton, or Duke; some of them may even be willing to swap positions and take the anguish that comes with hybridity so long as it brings with it the power and the prestige it seems to command.⁷⁷

This might seem to be a little too harsh, but the almost deliberate evasiveness and complexity of Spivak's work leads to such a sense of exasperation at the strategy that she is really up to.

However, I presume, that more than the location of her origin (that is to say the Third World), Spivak is perhaps more interested in the problematic of her sex, primarily the gendered subaltern. The relentless attacks on metropolitan feminism and its underlying strategies of implicit Eurocentrism reveal a deep disturbance within her about the intentions of people such as Julia Kristeva. She has gradually, and carefully come out of her position of the ethnic minority, the Third-World intellectual, and taken up the resistant reader's subject-position as she defines it repeatedly in her writings on feminism and the questions of the woman. The tangential, ad-hoc nature of her work emerges out of a sense of insecurity about the manner in which Third-World feminism is being slowly, but surely devoured by white European feminism. She has, in a way, moved out of the problematic of her location as the 'Third World' intellectual in the First World, to the more theoretical as well as the less addressed and less understood problematic of the negotiation between postcolonial and metropolitan feminisms. The consolidation of her position within the metropolitan academy has somehow made irrelevant the question of anxiety about her location as an intellectual and this has helped her move on to the more complicated issue of trying to theorize, if not represent, the gendered subaltern—so that she (the gendered subaltern) may be spoken of at least, if not heard. The ultimate distancing from the Subaltern Studies collective is perhaps thus a question of choice, of the decision as to what she ultimately wants to talk about, or who she wants to represent (or speak for). There

are people to talk about historiography, but women like Jashoda (in *Stanadayini*) also need a voice. No wonder, she remains primarily a feminist, a postcolonial feminist; however, the pluralism implicit within this problematic of representation (who represents whom?) will continue to incite debates about her purpose.

NOTES AND REFERENCES :

1. Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Gayatri Spivak: The Deconstructive Twist' in *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p.74.
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame', *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.135. She has perhaps been influenced by the unorthodox mode of some French feminist writing, particularly those by Hélène Cixous and Monique Wittig. She describes their work typically as 'familiar-essay-cum-prose-poem' (p.141) in her essay. However, the influence is confined to the 'unorthodox' mode of their writings only.
3. For a discussion of Edward Said's strategy of 'amateurism' see the previous chapter. A detailed discussion on this can be found in Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.35-6.
4. For a discussion of Edward Said's strategy of 'worldliness' see the previous chapter. A detailed discussion on this can be found in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, pp.32-5.
5. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, p.32.
6. See, 'Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga' in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Works*, ed. D. Landry and G. Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.18.
7. Spivak delineates the architectonics of French feminism as an apparatus of disruption and its influence on the anecdotal,

broken quality of her writing. See 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*.

8. See 'Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value' in Spivak, *Selected Works*. This is a rather obtuse essay composed from scattered lecture notes on global capitalism, international division of labour, and the questions of labour politics.
9. I have already noted that Gayatri Spivak's association with the Subaltern Studies collective is problematic. There have been bondings and differences which I shall discuss in the final chapter. For Spivak's critique of the Group see 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in Spivak, *Selected Works*, pp.203-35.
10. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.141-71.
11. Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Routledge, 1995) and (Calcutta: Thema, 1995).
12. See 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.211.
13. Edward Said has discussed how Antonio Gramsci was 'interested in everything' (p.88), and that he was 'able to experience a fantastic number of things' (p.88). Even then he calls Gramsci an 'inveterate note writer' and that it was 'very hard to derive from Gramsci's work a consistent political and philosophical position' (p.214). See Gauri Viswanathan, ed.,

Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said (New York: Vintage, 2001). This is where I find much similarity in the methodology of Spivak and Gramsci.

14. See a detailed discussion on how opponents have to be fought on their own grounds with their own methods being used against them in, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge' in *Oxford Literary Review*, 13.1 (1991), pp.220-51.
15. Ibid., p.234.
16. Mahasweta Devi, 'Stanadayini', *Ekshan* (Autumn, Bengali New Year 1384). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's translation appears as 'Breast-Giver' in *In Other Worlds*, pp.222-40.
17. Spivak distinguishes between two kinds of readers—the radical and the orthodox. The postmodern/anti-humanist Anglo-U.S. reader and his counterpart in the elite Indian institutions are the radical readers who tend to homogenize the Third World and read literature politically. The orthodox reader is resistant to such homogenizations. He is the dominant reader in India, influenced by a post-colonial, humanist education who considers this orthodox position to be the 'natural' way to read literature, and sees the literary text as a site for apolitical or non-political interaction between the author and the reader. See 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World' in *In Other Worlds*, pp.246-47.
18. Ibid., p.246.
19. Ibid., p.247.

20. It is interesting (and entertaining) to note how the qualifier 'elite' is used in different ways for the different critical schools. While Marxist Feminism is (Elite), Liberal Feminism is Elite, and the Theory of Woman's Body is "Elite", by which Spivak tries to show the kind of fetishistic sophistication that Western culture theory tries to simulate.
21. For an interesting discussion on this see Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.294-321.
22. See 'Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga' in Spivak, *Selected Works*, p.18.
23. Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern' in *In Other Worlds*, p.241.
24. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.129. See especially Spivak's discussion here of Jacques Derrida's study of Nietzsche in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken, 1985)—a piece on the politics of reading. Derrida suggests how the appropriation of certain texts of Nietzsche by the Nazis was not a 'misreading' of Nietzsche, but that there is something in his texts that has led on to this kind of appropriation. Thus her phrase 'use without excuse'.
25. Ibid., p.130.

26. Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.142.
27. Ibid., p.143.
28. Ibid., p.146.
29. See Spivak's critique of three 'elite' kinds of Western feminism in 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern' in *In Other Worlds*, pp.241-68.
30. Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview', an interview with Ellen Rooney in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.3.
31. See French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*, pp.134-53, and 'French Feminism Revisited' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, pp.141-71.
32. See Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview', an interview with Ellen Rooney in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.17.
33. Julia Kristeva, 'La femme, ce n'est jamais ça', *Tel Quel*, 59, Automne, p.21.
34. Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars, 1977).
35. Ibid., p.38.
36. Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*, p.136.
37. Ibid., p.136.
38. Ibid., p.138.
39. Ibid., p.138.

40. Spivak claims that Kristeva's source of literary information are a few simple statistics that she collected from a single article by Ai-Li S. Chin, 'Family Relations in Modern Chinese Fiction', in M. Freedman, ed., *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp.87-120. This was another callously essentialist attempt, Spivak thinks, coming from the white feminist located in the First World.
41. Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*, p.140.
42. Two of Spivak's most celebrated forays into the locational dynamic and unrepresentability of the subaltern are, of course, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, ed., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp.271-316, and 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World' in *In Other Worlds*, pp.241-68.
43. In her essay 'French Feminism in an International Frame' Spivak seems to be particularly interested in certain works of both Cixous and Wittig, and talks about the influence of their kind of feminism on her work. She specifically mentions : Hélène Cixous, 'Préparatifs de nocces au delà de l'abîme', trans. Eric Prenowitz in Susan Sellers, ed., *The Hélène Cixous Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) and Monique Wittig, *Lesbian Body*, trans. David Le Vay (New York: William Morrow, 1975).

44. Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*, p.141.
45. An interesting discussion on this might be found in Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame' in *In Other Worlds*.
46. Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p.252.
47. Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.156.
48. Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' in *New French Feminisms*, p.252.
49. Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.159.
50. Spivak is considerably elated at attempts of radical discontinuity that the works of Kalpana Bardhan constitute, particularly her consistent thwarting of all essentialisms. Spivak goes back to one essay in particular and seems to have been much impressed by it: Kalpana Bardhan, 'Women's Work, Welfare and Status: Forces of Tradition and Change in India', *South Asia Bulletin*, 6:1 (1986), pp.3-16.
51. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.121.
52. See Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986).

53. Ibid., p.15.
54. Ibid., p.15.
55. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.124
56. Ibid., p.124.
57. Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview', an interview with Ellen Rooney in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.6
58. Ibid., p.6.
59. Ibid., p.6.
60. Ibid., p.10.
61. Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, p.5.
62. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.125.
63. Ibid., p.125.
64. Ibid., p.127.
65. See Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken, 1985).
66. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.129.
67. Ibid., p.130.

68. See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp.142-8.
69. Spivak, 'Feminism and Deconstruction, Again' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.131.
70. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.24.
71. Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p.13.
72. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, p.208.
73. See, *ibid.*, pp.216-26.
74. *Ibid.*, p.227.
75. It is interesting to note, however, that one of the primary reasons that Sumit Sarkar provides for the failure of the subaltern historians to really be able to create an alternative discourse that cannot be hegemonically essentialized, is due to its over-enthusiasm in trying to accommodate these Third-World intellectuals located in the First World, such as Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. He finds them too metropolitan, too much located at the centre to effectively dislodge the hegemonic enterprise of the Western academy. He makes the following incisive remark in 'The Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*' in *Writing*

Social History (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; rpt.2005):

...[With] the publication in the United States of *Selected Subaltern Studies*, with a foreword by Edward Said and an editorial note by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, subaltern historiography was launched on a successful international, and more specifically metropolitan and US-academic, career. The intellectual formation of which its currently most prominent practitioners are now part...has gone through two phases: Third World cultural nationalism, followed by postmodernistic valorizations of 'fragments'...The mark of late *Subaltern Studies* therefore became not a succession of phases, but the counterposing of reified notions of 'community' or 'fragment', alternatively or sometimes in unison, against [the] highly generalized category of the 'modern' nation-state as the embodiment of Western cultural domination. The original separation of the domains of power and autonomy culminates here in an oscillation between the 'rhetorical absolutism' of structure and the 'fragmented fetishism' of the subject...(p.93)

76. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, p.228.
77. Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura' in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, p.305.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOMI K. BHABHA: CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND THE 'THIRD SPACE'

The Politics of Space

I have already discussed in the last chapter how Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak attempts to problematize her location within the First-World academia by questioning the sites of consistent homogeneity within the cultural dynamic of the West. Her ad-hoc, interventionist kind of critique has unsettled consistent subject-positions, as she has vacillated between her roles as a Marxist, a feminist, and a deconstructivist. As a subaltern critic of culture she has also pointed out what the Third-World subject 'cannot not want', thereby creating an aporetic space for the deconstruction of metropolitan historiography on the one hand, and positionality on the other:

Claiming catachreses from a space one cannot not want to inhabit and yet must criticize is, then, the deconstructive predicament of the postcolonial.¹

Such claim of a catachrestic reading of the postcolonial Third-World subject was a unique means of opening up the cultural space toward the possibilities of a pluralistic debate. It is through explorations of such alternative strategies of reading that Spivak had effectively used affirmative

deconstruction as a means to subvert the hegemonic formations of Western historiography. Her use of deconstruction was also interesting, and I have already discussed in the last chapter how she was put off by Julia Kristeva's use of deconstruction as a discursive tool. In this context I have also discussed how her location within the school of Anglo-American deconstruction was itself problematic, and could not be conclusively defined.

It is this problem of defining or locating that is central to the discussion of the Third-World, postcolonial intellectuals in the First World. Homi Bhabha is no exception. In fact, with the abundance of postmodern concerns in Bhabha's works, it is even more difficult to categorize or place him within a particular paradigm of the development of Third-World intellectual positions. His theoretical anarchism rejects any consistent metalanguage, thereby 'refusing to let his terms reify into static concepts', which is akin to but much more complex than Spivak's arbitrary and interventionist critique.² The radical postmodern position that he assumes leads him to a rejection even of the anti-humanist tropes that some of his predecessors such as Edward Said have used more or less successfully. His movement 'outside the sentence' is a movement beyond any possible logocentrism, and opens up this debate about representation into an unforeseen hybridity.³ I am going to come back to this argument in more detail later. Primarily, however, in moving outside the sentence Bhabha tried to cancel out any possibility of falling into the trap of the politics of binaries, that he felt had

considerably weakened Edward Said's argument. This is where, I presume, Bhabha is more like Spivak in choosing an arbitrary method of disruption to launch a counter-narrative against the pan-assimilationist strategies of the Western theoretical system.

Differences with Edward Said

At the time when Said had begun to publish his writings on the politics of domination and governance, he was considered quite revolutionary in his mode of attack and influences. This was one of the primary reasons for his immense popularity, particularly among Third-World intellectuals, whose primary instinct was the desperate one of survival against the all-pervasive techniques of assimilation of the Western socio-political system. With the publication of *Orientalism* they acquired a new weapon against Western humanist politics. Considering Said's influences, namely Foucault and Gramsci, and his stance on the subjects of imperialism and colonialism, one might easily conclude that he was anti-humanist in his politics. Notwithstanding the fact that this stance of anti-humanism was quite fashionable to assume in the America of the sixties and the seventies, one must also admit that this was a veritably valid means of registering one's protest against discursive dominance at that time. I say this to disarm the argument that some critics put forth about Edward Said's anti-humanism being a fashionable strategy to survive in the Western academia. What is also interesting is the way Said has used this weapon of anti-humanism. He has never rejected humanism. On the

contrary he has liberally used their research methodologies and resource materials to gather the information he has used against them. Only, his tools were different and new. He used the counter-discursive logic of anti-humanism to explode the myths about the 'white man's burden', the lazy native, the objectivity of literature, or even the discipline of history. Two of his most read books, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, are documentary evidences of such a contrapuntal manner of reading.

However revolutionary Said might have been during his time, Homi Bhabha and his techniques of reading have really challenged not only the Western discursive systems, but their critiques by the likes of Said as well. His basic intention was to move beyond the debate between discourse and counter-discourse and think of a location for the Third-World intellectual (or even the common man; distinctions between the intellectual and the common man also dissolve in Bhabha's works) that is beyond this categorized, defined dynamic of contestation. His politics is arbitrary and disruptive, even more so than Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Thus, inevitably, he has moved out of the teleological or the causal bind that is at the root of liberal humanist assumptions; those assumptions which, I am afraid, Said had worked within. But first let me note the basic points where Bhabha departed considerably from Said.

The Politics of Binaries

It is rather interesting to note the way Bhabha tackles the problematic of binary opposition—the way Edward Said

uses it, and he himself opposes and transcends it. What Bhabha initially looks into in his essay 'The Other Question' are the basic patterns of the development of colonial discourse and the tropes that they use.⁴ He immediately notices how the predominant strategic function of colonial discourse was to create a space for the colonized through the production of knowledge, a continuous mechanism of surveillance, and the creation of stereotypes. Such a strategy of surveillance and typification helped the colonizer to categorize and hence establish a system of administration on the one hand, and to locate the colonized as the 'other' so as to ratify cultural authority/superiority, on the other:

Despite the play of power within colonial discourse and the shifting positionalities of its subjects (for example, effects of class, gender, ideology, different social formations, varied systems of colonization and so on), I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a 'subject nation', appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity. Therefore, despite the 'play' in the colonial system which is crucial to its exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible.⁵

This is how the inherent politics of binarism is played out. Many Third-World intellectuals dealing with the politics of colonization failed to notice the implicit paradox within this system of operation. Whereas the consistent 'other'ing of the

colonized is used to situate the West in a position of binary superiority, the complete knowability or visibility of the subject people is also assumed, as if the paradigms of Western systems of knowledge have managed to know or read the 'other' completely. Bhabha's slow but sure movement toward a psychological critique of imperial politics is perhaps a ploy to address this gap or catachrestic flaw that has been overlooked by the Third-World critique of imperialism.

Bhabha sees Said to have fallen into the same trap of binary politics. This, according to him, is only a consolidation of Western hegemonic strategy, as the very acceptance of this binary logic is in a way succumbing to the assimilationist strategies of imperial power. One of the chief emphases in Said's works has been the problem of representation, a trope intrinsically linked to the problematic of location and space. It is while addressing these issues that Said uses the Foucauldian paradigms of knowledge and power. It is exactly at this moment, Bhabha notes, that Said unconsciously falls into the trap of binarisms: power as opposed to powerlessness; knowledge as contrasted against ignorance.

The differentiation that Said makes between latent and manifest Orientalisms is also symptomatic of the same implicit binary politics that completely eludes him.⁶ This is not to say, however, that he misunderstood the problem of imperial politics and domination. On the contrary, as I have already said, he was one of the foremost intellectuals from

the Third World who addressed the politics of representation in such detail. What he perhaps failed to realize was that his studied invectives against the epistemic knowledge systems of the West could easily be essentialized by the fluid mechanism of the binary framework that was (and perhaps, is) continuously in operation.⁷

Bhabha clearly shows us this binary pattern that Said easily succumbed to. He elucidates how Said's manifest Orientalism talks about the learning, discovery and practise of imperialist politics—those signifiers of stability that constitute a static system of rule and discipline, and the logic of governance. On the other hand, latent Orientalism is the site of dreams, images, fantasies, myths and obsessions that are manifested through literature and the arts, cultural geography, and myriad other means of informing the unconscious. These polarities that Said creates are easily separable and can be destabilized by consistent discursive attacks, which is what his critics such as Bernard Lewis have done. Such distinct binarisms fail to create a unitary epistemic system of protest or subversion that has multiple polarities and is essentially fluid in its dynamics.

What is denied in Said's idea of latent and manifest Orientalism is a differential quality that allows the concepts to play against each other. This would have enabled a continuous movement without any stable position or fixed co-ordinates thereby denying colonial discourse any chance to construe an attack. What Bhabha is suggesting is that in his creation of structures of resistance Said has failed to

problematize counter-discourse, and his pattern of protest was easily subsumed. Although, I feel, a lot of this is true, one must realize the advantage that Bhabha has in working with postmodern tools that have allowed him free play, which Said was perhaps denied of. By situating himself within the postmodern condition it has been possible for Bhabha to maintain a differential quality throughout his work, something that was not entirely possible for Said to imagine in the theoretical milieu that he was working in.

Representation of the 'Other'

I have already pointed out how the colonial stereotype is one of the models for the development of colonial discourse, the kind of cataloguing that helps the imperialist to create a monolithic construction of the Orient that should be dominated and ruled. Said immediately latches on to the idea of the stereotype and tries to deconstruct the myths created around it, and throughout he has maintained this as a valid course of attack against discursive formations. One of Said's chief agenda in terms of the politics of representation is to oppose the othering of the colonial subject through the formation of stereotypes. He realizes in his binary conceptions that a complete negation or disavowal of stereotypical representation might not be possible (even if decolonization is possible), and thus there is the need for an alternative language of resistance within this encounter between East and West. We notice his seething anger in a passage in *Orientalism*:

One [the West] tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well-known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things.⁸

This sense of disgust culminates in a realization of confusion within colonial discourse itself, which idea unfortunately he does not further develop:

The orient at large...vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty.⁹

Here we might anticipate both the anger and the frustration of the Third-World intellectual. It is a realization of the power of colonial discourse on the one hand, and its inherent confusion on the other. Unfortunately, however, at the time when Said is writing he does not possess the necessary tools that postmodernism has devised much later, to conclusively deconstruct this kind of ambivalence. Said understands his (and the Orient's) powerlessness to take advantage of this theoretical aporia. Ideally, he could have pointed out the inherent contradiction within imperial paradigms and hence situate the problem of representation on a separate plane altogether. He realizes the moment but cannot seize it because of the ultimately traditional framework that he was working within.

This is the moment where Bhabha steps in. His stance is that of the Third-World intellectual who has arrived in the First World equipped with postmodern theoretical tools. He constructs and cancels, deconstructs and re-constructs at ease, thereby playing the game of representation on a plane completely removed from Said's. Here is something we need to understand from the point of view of location. Although both Said and Bhabha are representatives of the Third World in the First, their approaches to the problem of representation are markedly different. In Bhabha there is much less anxiety about his location than in Said. He approaches the problem of the stereotype in a manner very different from Said. The body of colonial discourse remains incomplete for Bhabha until he locates 'the stereotype, as an arrested, fetishistic mode of representation within its field of identification...'¹⁰ He takes up the same trope of representation as stereotype but locates it out of the political into the psychological. He tries to identify the problem in terms of the 'Lacanian schema of the Imaginary'.¹¹ At the present moment I am not going into a detailed discussion on Bhabha's concept of the 'fetish' which he has talked about in much detail in some of his essays.¹² But talking in terms of representation we see how Bhabha re-locates the Saidian concept of latent Orientalism. He sees the Imaginary as constituted of two forms—narcissism and aggressivity. While narcissism reminds the subject of his inherent difference from the Orient and a consequent feeling of superiority, his aggressivity masks this difference in terms of the politics of identity with the

colonized. The identity of the colonizer is thus qualified by both fixity and fantasy—the fixity of a monolithic image of the colonized subject to dominate, compare, or identify with, as also the fantasy of the narcissistic pleasure of superiority. Both these functions of the Imaginary therefore need the stereotype as an imperative.

By lifting this problematic of representation out of the political into the psychological, Bhabha allows a free-play of meanings which are not inevitably caught up in the discursive paradigms of colonial rule. What Bhabha is trying to achieve is a dynamic of equality between the First and the Third World in terms of representation. We need not over-emphasize the possibilities of such equality, but the movement out of the political into the psychological or the Imaginary can at least ensure a pluralistic, uncertain, ambivalent framework for the construction of identity. What I have tried to show in the discussion above is how Bhabha qualifies Said's protests about the problematic of representation and looks to re-constellate it out of its simplistic binary, oppositional logic, into a postmodern one of ambivalence, hybridity and heterogeneity.

The First World Location: Differences and Discontinuities

In my previous chapter on Gayatri Spivak as well as in the present one on Homi Bhabha I have discussed how both of them depart from Edward Said in their approach. This is, of course, not to say that they acknowledge Said only casually, as a predecessor, who also wrote about the problems of

imperialism and representation. On the contrary, both of them acknowledge him as a precursor, as someone, who for the first time categorically defined Third-World representation as a site for debate and discussion. It was only after him that Western academic discourse began to seriously address the question of Third-World representation, and the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First. However, what both Spivak and Bhabha departed from was the technique that Said used. I have already discussed in the last chapter how Spivak's technique was one of arbitrariness and disruption. Homi Bhabha, with his postmodern tools, has taken this technique of disruption to new heights. As a major theoretician from the Third World the pressure that Bhabha has exerted with his unique ideas of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, has not only subverted Western discursivity, but has also finally consolidated the position of the Third-World intellectual in the First.

Mimicry: Resemblance and Menace

An interesting aspect of Bhabha's work is the way he stitches aspects of his issues with colonial politics with that of his strategies of representation. While he discusses colonial tropes of discursivity and appropriation on the one hand, he methodically addresses the problematic of his (or the Third-World intellectual's) location in the West, on the other. The truly postmodern aspect of Bhabha's work is in the neatness with which he undertakes this enterprise, cleverly camouflaging his agenda of location within his well researched discourse on colonialism and its critique. What I

mean is really that it is easy to miss Bhabha's strategy because of the layered masks he puts on them. Let us take mimicry, for example. Apparently it might seem to be a discourse on colonial strategies of domination and a consequent thwarting of the same by the imperialized. Of course it is a critique of colonial domination and an interesting psychological unravelling of possibilities of challenging it. But it is also more than just this. Once the reader removes this mask, he discovers the face of the Third-World intellectual lurking behind it. He also mimics; he also uses the English language; he has also chosen the First-World location. So is mimicry not his (Bhabha's) strategy of protest, of consolidating his position, of trying to negotiate possibilities of a dialogue or debate? This is the reason why reading Bhabha is so interesting—a continuous intellectual challenge to unmask and decipher.

Let us see what his concept of mimicry entails—both in terms of method and strategy. In the first place mimicry is born out of the necessity of colonial domination, to assert itself through a panoptical vision of domination. This entails not only a pervasive strategy of cultural imperialism, but a regular supply of indigenous imitators of an identical cultural logic who would maintain the mechanics of the imperial administration:

...colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say,

that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*.¹³

This ambivalence is both reassuring and menacing. The similarity that is 'not quite' helps the colonizer to locate the other as 'a difference', the fine objectivity that sustains the master-slave binary and helps the tropes of power. But what is implicit is the other obvious argument that is located antipodally, and holds true by the same logic. The subject-position of this mimic man has shifted from its conclusively binary one of the colonized 'other'. He is now 'other' but 'not quite'. This lateral movement places him in the ambivalent position of the hybrid subject who is neither colonizer nor colonized, but something in between. This in-betweenness of the emergent colonial subject who is 'white, but not quite' portends the beginning of a counter-gaze that effectively displaces the social control of the power centre. As Bhabha writes, '...the reforming civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double...' ¹⁴ This continuous slippage from the legitimate pattern of the colonizer-colonized binary is something that Bhabha discovers from his postmodern location, and this is what is menacing about the otherwise sound administrative logic of the creation of the mimic man.

This kind of a double bind is something that the colonial masters did not obviously anticipate. However, once this mechanism of the creation of the mimic men was set in motion, the inevitability of this 'disciplinary gaze' became apparent. The initial necessity for the master was to create a

‘reformed’ colonial subject who would help in matters of administration. As Macaulay had clearly laid down the exact denomination of this pandering colonial subject, who is trained to help and not to think, trained to imitate rather than imagine, to execute much less to know matters of colonial policy:

...a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.¹⁵

Clearly, the basic idea behind the creation of these Anglicized (but not English) subjects was to make them *repeat* rather than *represent* the West and its socio-cultural formations. It was also to transform Indian knowledge into European information that would facilitate domination and rule:

The Indians were sources or “native informants” who supplied information, *viva voce*, in English or Indian languages; who collected, translated, and discussed texts and documents; and who wrote exegeses of various kinds that were classified, processed, and analyzed into knowledge *of* or *about* India.¹⁶

However, what the European master failed to realize was that many of these chosen and educated colonial subjects who were meant to play the role of the mimic men were also men of letters by their own right. They realized that they were being used by the colonizer for the simple reason that they were better than many of their brethren in certain

respects. In many cases, they were even superior to some of their English masters, and this is why there was always the implicit possibility of the counter-gaze:

The Indian scholar knew he was superior to his European Master in respect of Indian languages, [but] he was primarily an informant, a mere tool in the exercise of language teaching to be handled by others.¹⁷

This sense of a deliberate suppression by the British master, the humiliation of being merely an 'informant' and not an intellectual was something that automatically created the occasion for counter-gaze, for making the colonizer nervous and uncomfortable.

This is the ambivalent location that Bhabha talks about. The English-educated colonial subject has the advantage of being conversant with the cultural tropes of both the colonizer and the colonized. He thus becomes a representative of a difference that works both ways—that is both for the colonial master and his colonized other. Bhabha compares this kind of colonial textuality with the partial nature of Freudian fantasy that is caught between the unconscious and the preconscious. This is how Freud talks about fantasy:

Their mixed and split origin is what decides their fate. We may compare them with individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are

excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges.¹⁸

It is this kind of an interdictory location that is the ideal site for mimicry, a blurred frame of reference from where this mimic man revalues the normative principles of race, writing, history that have been laid down by colonial hegemony. This is what Bhabha calls the 'metonymy of presence'—a camouflage, a form of resemblance, which differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically:

The desire of colonial mimicry—an interdictory desire—may not have an object, but it has strategic objectives which I shall call the *metonymy of presence*.¹⁹

Thus the desire for mimicry, that I had argued in the beginning to be the desire of the colonizer is eventually transformed into a strategic desire of the colonized, who, metonymically subverts the location from one of disadvantage to one of advantage.

When I talk about the mimic man revaluing the normative principles of hegemonic imperialism in terms of race, writing or history, I do not necessarily insist on this being an academic or a pedagogical process—a process which is perhaps the most obvious one for the middle class *babu*. No doubt there were conscious intellectual enterprises on the part of the native men of letters to make full use of their interdictory locations, and thereby subvert the discursive imperial dynamic: obvious examples in Bengal

were the likes of Raja Rammohan Roy, Raj Narayan Bose or Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay who wrote and spoke in both their native tongue and English and who were some of the chief and most powerful instruments of nationalism in India (and obviously Bengal). However, I want to address this issue of interdictory locations from a somewhat different perspective rather than this obvious one of counter-discursive nationalism. I have already spoken about an implicit possibility of counter-gaze that started working in the minds of these mimic men. The permanent pressure of imperialism on the one hand, and the perpetual desire of subversion on the other, let the native to prepare himself psychologically for a fight back. Interestingly, this manner of psychological seasoning was not always conscious or deliberate. Sometimes this happened suddenly like an epiphany and sometimes from a continuous deliberation within the subconscious. Religion or more precisely, religiosity played a key role in such methods of counter-gaze. The tradition of Indian spirituality and a return to religion as a buffer was thus an interesting method of both evasion and subversion of the imperial logic. Religiosity or spiritualism is sometimes a bit abstract in its logic, and thus, this trope of using the divine was a unique way of subversion. Here I shall try to establish this point.

The Case of Aurobindo Ghose

Aurobindo Ghose could be a classic example of this kind of an evasive, differential religiosity. His stance as a god-man of sorts not only subverted the much used trope of imperial

rationality, but also supplied, at least for a certain period of time, a frenzy associated with religious nationalism.

Aurobindo was born Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose to a completely Anglicized and Brahmo father Krishnadhan Ghose. Krishnadhan belonged to that category of brown sahibs who would never conceive of using his location as a 'metonymy of presence'. From his unilaterally defined location he hated everything Indian—its culture, language, religion and people. At the age of seven Aurobindo was shipped to England and housed under the care of Reverend and Mrs. Drewett, with strict instructions that he be well guarded from anything remotely Indian. Thus Aurobindo took lessons in English, Latin, Greek and French, and did not even know how to speak properly in his mother tongue. Sisir Kumar Mitra rightly points out that Krishnadhan 'took the greatest care that nothing Indian should touch this son of his'.²⁰

Due to such strict instructions Aurobindo never made any friends in England, and he grew up a nervous and petulant child who was called 'Baby Ghose' by his classmates.²¹ It was perhaps in his loneliness that the first seeds of rebellion were sown. He began to review the West and the implications of imperialism with inputs from his maternal grandfather Raj Narayan Bose, and certain nationalist magazines that would trickle through to England. He took the first part of the Classical Tripos with a first class, and then did not take the degree. He also deliberately flunked in the Indian Civil Service examination. Having

fared extremely well in all the exams of the civil service he deliberately missed the riding test and was thereby disqualified.²²

Aurobindo dropped the 'Ackroyd' from his name and came back to India. The seeds of nationalism that were sown in him during the final phase of his stay in England now germinated with vigour in Baroda where he was a bureaucrat and a language teacher. He started learning Indian languages and quickly picked up Bengali, Sanskrit, Gujarati and Marathi. It was during this phase that he started having spiritual experiences and had the experience of being enveloped by a deep calm and silence.²³ He also claimed that he had seen the Goddess Kali as a living presence, and it is through such spiritual experience that the subversive logic of nationalism started to work. The mythography of India as a powerful but oppressed Mother started to feature in his literary works. He writes:

In the unending revolutions of the world, as the wheel of the Eternal turns rightly in the courses, the Infinite Energy, which streams forth from the Eternal... sets the wheel to work...This Infinite Energy is Bhavani. She also is Durga. She is Kali; she is Radha the beloved, she is Lakshmi. She is our mother and creatress of us all. In the present age the mother is manifested as the Mother of Strength.²⁴

This was almost like a manifesto of nationalism, but spread by means of the frenzy of religion. This was obviously a very oblique and subversive method that Aurobindo was

using. These tropes of *swadharma* (one's religion) and *swajati* (one's race) were beyond the traditional weapons or means of subversion—opposition, or direct confrontation, or questioning the master narratives of the West. Religion and the concept of the 'jati' that were being used in this kind of nationalism were exclusive of the Foucauldian power-knowledge paradigm that the colonial masters were so used to. Bhabha sees the chief strategy of colonial discourse to be the creation of a space, through the production of systems of knowledge, through which to exercise surveillance and control. According to him, colonial discourse 'seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledges of colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical...' ²⁵ Aurobindo was acting outside this stereotype, and thereby subverting the binary logic. The brown sahib who was supposed to be the pro-imperialist interlocutor, the link that would consolidate the empire, was reacting in a completely incomprehensible manner. What Aurobindo was doing was really simple: he was using his ambivalent location—that of the English educated native—against the expected pattern of its use. Thus, the imperial perspective of viewing the colonized 'as a social reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible' ²⁶ was frustrated by Aurobindo's actions. He was arrested for sedition, and on his release moved into a completely spiritual life in Pondicherry, a French colony at that time. This part of his life is not topical to our present discussion. However, Aurobindo's location, I presume,

remains quite interesting in terms of the 'metonymy of presence' that Bhabha is talking about.

Religion as Nationalism

Aurobindo Ghose's life in India—both political and spiritual—might be seen as a perpetual search for self-esteem and cultural autonomy. His reaching back to the classical texts of Hinduism, was to develop a critical awareness of one's own culture, as also a search for individual authenticity. The logic of evasion that he was using against British imperialism was interesting. One of the well-known tropes of cultural imperialism has always been to trivialize the 'present' of the colonized country as contrasted to its 'glorious past'. Thus the past is already authenticated within the logic of imperialism itself. The past was glorious and noteworthy, and the present is not even a shadow of that past. Aurobindo, instead of playing the obvious game of opposition, used this trope of the glory of the past to perfection. In a short pamphlet called *Bhawani Mandir* he liberally used resources of the past, particularly from the *Markandaya Purana*—which was a Brahmanical text with Tantric influences.²⁷ The concept of 'Shakti' that he evokes in *Bhawani Mandir* is clearly borrowed from the *Markandaya Purana* :

What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisa Mardini sprang into being from the

Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people; but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of tamas, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of tamas we have but to wake the Brahma within.²⁸

This is an interesting revival of the past, a complete surrender to spiritualism, something that both underplays and consolidates nationalism and a sense of cultural identity at the same time. This harking back to the past is essentially rooted in indigenous tradition and beyond the immediate scope of binary games of essentialism. This evocation of the Brahma is very self-contained, completely independent of all foreignness. Leonard Gordon writes, 'In *Bhawani Mandir* the British are not present and are not held responsible for the fall of India. Rather, Indians abandoned Shakti and therefore were abandoned by her.'²⁹ What needs to be noted is the element of surprise and shock of the British master at the behaviour of the brown sahib. This is a movement beyond all scopes of essentialism. In fact this is an use of the 'past' that is rarely problematized by imperialist discourse, the past that is advertised as glorious by the colonialist himself.

Thus the ambivalence of location of the brown sahib is suddenly overshadowed by an ambivalent temporality where the possibility of the 'past' is re-evoked in the 'present', and used as a means of disruption. Bhabha notes

this kind of a deliberate return to tradition, a creation of counter-narratives that produce fluid, contingent boundaries disturbing the essentialist ideological totalizations by the colonizer:

For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is *archaic* and *mythical*, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the *patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism*.³⁰(italics mine)

Through such movement into traditionalism and an evocation of *brahmatej*(the power of the Brahman), the politics of nationalism moves on to a mythographic framework, beyond the immediate reach of imperial stereotypes.³¹ This kind of a displaced 'atavistic' plurality easily overcomes the tropes of both fixity and fantasy, that I have already discussed earlier, with which the colonizer tries to arrest the colonized subject within a unilateral and stereotypical representation.

This game of traditionalism, of seeking cultural nourishment from the past that the brown sahib played, sometimes consciously (like Aurobindo), or sometimes unconsciously (in a way like Keshab Chandra Sen), completely unsettled the purpose of creation of these mimic men. The colonized 'other' who is 'white but not quite' makes full use of this ambivalence to transform narcissism of the colonizer to paranoia, and to violate the rational,

enlightened claims of his enunciatory logic. As Bhabha writes:

The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry*—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to *menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite.³²

It is this same 'not quite'ness that is symptomatic of the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First-World academia. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is thus a way of writing back, a way of registering one's presence. His choice of postmodernism as a theoretical tool is to maintain the dynamics of ambivalence, to locate the Third-World intellectual within the certitude of uncertainty. He liberally uses their theoretical tools, their discursive logic, and thereby clearly walks around the paradigm of binary confrontation, but never, for a moment, steps inside it. This is a 'menace' that cannot be theorized, and hence cannot be essentialized or appropriated as Bhabha never takes a position or assumes a role. His ever shifting, ever evasive location creates multiple aporetic possibilities and this is perhaps what Bhabha sees as the predicament of the Third-World intellectual in the First World.

'Intervening Ideologically',³³

I have already talked about the essentially interventionist role that some of the Third-World intellectuals assume from their location in the First World. For that matter, at least two of the three intellectuals I have discussed here, namely Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha are specifically and

deliberately interventionist and they use their interventionism as a strategy to dislocate the theoretical discourse of the First World.

Bhabha talks about his theoretical enterprise in much detail in his essay *The Commitment to Theory* where he clearly lays down the reasons for his subversive interventionism:

I am convinced that, in the language of political economy, it is legitimate to represent the relations of exploitation and domination in the discursive division between the First and Third World, the North and the South. Despite the claims to a spurious rhetoric of 'internationalism' on the part of the established multinationals and the networks of the new communications technology industries, such circulation of signs and commodities as they are, are caught in the vicious circuits of surplus value that link First World capital to Third World labour markets through the chains of the international division of labour, and national comprador classes.³⁴

That is to say that he already accepts the 'relations of exploitation and domination' as given, and views the liberalist and the liberationist internationalism of the First World with complete scepticism when he sets upon theorizing his location, or for that matter the location of the Third World vis-à-vis the First. Although they proceeded on different lines of argument, it is interesting to note that Gayatri Spivak also saw the enterprise of global capitalism

as the First World's way of violating laws of labour legislation and environmental regulation.³⁵

Bhabha also sees a clear and alarming movement towards nationalism in the policy decisions of the Anglo-American world. In the theoretical sphere nationalism has gone down as a strategy for quite some years, particularly after the almost meteoric rise of postmodernism.³⁶ However, what is noteworthy is the protracted use of nationalism in the sphere of politics by the First World. This has led not only to economic and political domination, but also to forms of cultural imperialism in terms of the control and disbursement of information, the popular media, and creation of specialized institutions and academics who maintain a hegemonic influence over the rest of the world. Examples of this are not difficult to find. America's 'backyard' policy towards the Caribbean and Latin America, Britain's Falklands Campaign, the triumphalism of the American and British forces during the Gulf War, or the more recent attack on Iraq and the Saddam Hussein regime accusing them of possessing weapons of mass destruction (that were never found) are glaring examples. Bhabha finds in the language of international diplomacy 'a sharp growth in a new Anglo-American nationalism', economic and military decisions that are implicitly (but blatantly) neo-imperialist in their import, and those that disregard 'the independence and autonomy of peoples and places in the Third World'.³⁷ It is the right to these 'independence and autonomy' that concern Bhabha when he takes up this issue of representation vis-à-vis the First and the Third Worlds. His forays into theory are an

attempt to understand whether 'the language of theory [is] merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?'³⁸

Shifting Margins: The Theorist and/or the Activist

Bhabha is sceptical about making too many water-tight distinctions and class specifications amongst the adversarial paradigms that constitute protest against discourse. He insists that such clear-cut distinctions and independent classification of agenda can only go on to help the power-centre to appropriate and consequently essentialize such protest. This is where Bhabha is so similar to Spivak. Both of them insist on the arbitrary and disruptive function of a critique. The more the process is homogeneous and categorically classified, the less is its chance of sustaining itself as a mechanism of protest. The continuous insistence on heterogeneity, a disparate logic of protest, is what locates Bhabha (and in a sense Spivak) within the dynamics of a postmodern system. A little while ago I have spoken about Bhabha not taking up any fixed position, but hovering around uncertainly within the various systems of disruption and subversion. This exactly is Bhabha's technique, an ambivalent positionality, a continuously shifting paradigm so that he might never be essentialized. He writes:

I want to take my stand on the shifting margins of cultural displacement—that confounds any profound or 'authentic' sense of a 'national' culture or an 'organic' intellectual—and ask what the function of a

committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure.³⁹

This is interesting. In academic circles Bhabha is more often than not construed as an obscure theorist. But here he is consciously moving out of theory, out of any 'committed theoretical perspective'. What is more, he does not differentiate categorically between theorizing and activism, both of which, for him, are political applications of a rhetoric of protest. While the former attacks discursive political ideas and principles, the latter is temporally bound to a specific and immediate event. The only difference Bhabha finds in them is 'in their operational qualities'.⁴⁰

Bhabha's critics might of course read a little more than is apparent in such an argument. What is Bhabha's intention in trying to establish theorizing and activism as instrumentally similar, but operationally different? Is he, therefore, trying to consolidate his own, strictly theoretical position, as an academic in the First World? There are critics who talk about Bhabha's conscious and deliberate obscurantism, and thus relegate him to the almost ineffective position of the armchair intellectual, who is far removed from the very physical world of political activism.⁴¹ When Bhabha says, 'It is a sign of political maturity to accept that there are many forms of political writing whose different effects are obscured when they are divided between the "theoretical" and the "activist" ',⁴² his critics feel that he is

trying to polemically justify his secure and comfortable position within the academia. The argument that both the positions are equally effective is a ploy that Bhabha uses to shun the risks involved in actual activism, or a directly political role as an intellectual. However, I feel, that there is a bit of over-simplification involved in such an argument. The position that Bhabha seeks for himself is a bit more complicated than is immediately apparent, and it will perhaps be unfair to dilute his efforts as politically ineffective.

Politics as the Point of Enunciation

Bhabha sees the political less as a bi-polar construct, and more as an ambivalent space for negotiating representation. And he finds the theoretical as deeply embedded in the political, the latter being a site for imaginary representations of both activism and theory.⁴³ He thus sees the political as a hybrid, multipolar space that qualifies meaning, helps it emerge in its diversity/multiplicity thereby making 'truth' contingent and relative. Let me analyze the very syllogistic manner in which Bhabha establishes this point. He writes:

...the theoretical enterprise has to represent the adversarial authority (of power and/or knowledge) which, in a doubly inscribed move, it simultaneously seeks to subvert and replace.⁴⁴

He is talking about the function of theory. The representation of the adversarial authority is thus not fixed, but 'doubly inscribed', not searching for a unilateral truth, but ambivalent and slippery:

The 'true' is always marked and informed by the ambivalence of the process itself, the productivity of meanings that construct counter-knowledges in *medias res*...⁴⁵

Political positions are thus always and inevitably emerging, ambivalent and in a state of flux. The political 'imagination' that Bhabha conceives of is set into motion in 'the unreal neutral space of the Third Person',⁴⁶ not as a priori pre-constituted principle but as a dialogical and discursive exchange.⁴⁷

We must continuously remind ourselves that there is a purpose behind Bhabha's situating the political realm in such a state of abstract and emergent flux. The debate and dialogue that constitute this textual process of political antagonism is suited ideally for the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World. Unless there is an ideological reconstitution of the Western academy, unless there is an existence of a postmodern logic of hovering around the fringes of political commitment, the Third-World intellectual will always be devoured by the powerful discursive apparatus of the First World. Consequently, therefore, an essentialist politics will set in with its agenda of authority and appropriation, and thus the modernist paradigms of superiority and inferiority—the inevitable binarism that has always divided the two worlds—will frustrate the purpose of debate and dialogue on equal terms. This is why Bhabha has always insisted on ambivalence as a strategy when it comes to the realm of the political:

...politics can only become representative, a truly public discourse, through a splitting in the signification of the subject of representation; through an ambivalence at the point of the enunciation of a politics.⁴⁸

It is this point of enunciation that Bhabha wants to hybridize for the fullest play of all the possibilities of representation.

Translation and Negotiation

From the very arbitrary and contingent location of political ambivalence Bhabha wants to carry out his job as critic and commentator. The location that he wants for himself is indeed complicated and heterogeneous, and in order to conceive of or comprehend such a position one needs to completely detach oneself from the very structured pattern of humanist thought and its obvious discursive implications. In order that the language of critique is effective in the 'imaginative' political space that he has already enunciated, the grounds of binary opposition must open up a space of translation. And Bhabha defines this space of translation quite unambiguously:

...a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of apolitical object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics.⁴⁹

Thus 'translation' is a process that involves a lateral movement which takes us out of the realm of a simplistic politics of binary opposition. I call this movement lateral because translation is not a movement beyond the scope of the self and the other. It is rather located on the same plane, where both interact with each other, but throw up a multiplicity of heterogeneous possibilities each more likely than the other, and all of them equally valid.

It is through such a process of cultural translation that Bhabha tries to move into the larger field of negotiation. Negotiation as a process is set in motion within this 'moment of politics' that Bhabha deduces, and thus the process of negotiation is automatically enmeshed in the heterogeneity of the system. The polysemic possibilities of representation create an uncertain field of force and thus the question of identity can be debated with the least resistance from discursive hierarchies. *Negotiation* is not *negation* as Bhabha insists, and he wants to find in it a 'structure of *iteration* which informs political movements that attempt to articulate antagonistic and oppositional elements without the redemptive rationality of sublation or transcendence'.⁵⁰ This kind of radical critique that Bhabha enunciates creates the possibility of a heterology where there is always a chance of dialogue without the presence of such reductive paradigms as 'self' and 'other', imperialist and imperialized, First World and Third World.⁵¹ This dialogue is also made possible by the continuously shifting positions of the subject in question. Within this paradigm of multiplying heterogeneity, the subject cannot assume a fixed, monolithic

position in terms of representation, as the very notion of representability is put to the test:

...each position is always a process of translation and transference of meaning. Each objective is constructed on the trace of that perspective that it puts under erasure; each political object is determined in relation to the other, and displaced in that critical act.⁵²

It is thus through a refusal of fixity, a denial of categories, a perpetually shifting positionality that Bhabha tries to problematize location. Of course, inevitably, the ambiguity of his location is also included in the problem.

Culture as Difference: The Third Space

While discussing the problem of culture as a discipline, Bhabha has always expressed his frustrations about the way culture theory is taught. The obvious assumption that critical theory is 'Western' and hence must represent or qualify the western logocentric sign has been given in the study of literary or culture theory. The politics of culture, however, has been more complicated than meets the eye. The liberal humanist stance of the Western academy has always made it promote its agenda of culture studies as a democratic discipline, which accepts all cultures as central to its area of concern. It is this insistence on the acceptance of diversity of cultures that Third-World intellectuals have always found problematic. The First-World intellectual has always tried to read the 'other' culture with care and interest, but Bhabha sees in this only an implicit (conscious or unconscious)

agenda of appropriation and consequent essentialism. The 'other' cultures are always read in terms of the West, in terms of the paradigms of Western cultural developments and practice:

Montesquieu's Turkish Despot, Barthes's Japan, Derrida's Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard's Cashinahua pagans are part of...[a] strategy of containment where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation. The Other is cited, quoted, framed illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial enlightenment.⁵³

Bhabha here names some of the finest theorists of the West, and accuses them of thwarting the articulation of the Other. The East has always, significantly, been turned into an object of knowledge, always falling prey to the relations of disciplinary domination and the institutional powers of critical theory.

This is why, perhaps, Bhabha realizes the importance of moving out of the trope of cultural diversity. The concept of cultural diversity has been used as a strategy of appropriation, as the centre-margin equation is always at work. The binary logic, the hierarchical separation between the West and the rest is symptomatic of the development of cultural diversity. In order to discover an alternative to this hegemonic pattern of development of Western critical theory Bhabha imagines a territory of translation where cultures would be analyzed in terms of their 'difference', and not in

terms of their diversity. The differential always happens on an ambivalent, ever-changing plane, where hierarchies and hegemonies are automatically undercut. Representation occurs within a much more democratic system, where certitudes of colonial authority are systematically deconstructed. For Bhabha, the process of translation is simply 'the opening up of another contentious political and cultural site at the heart of colonial representation.'⁵⁴ And cultural difference is a process of *enunciation*, where all cultures are incessantly qualified by each other. The process is perpetual and ever-evolving, thereby not allowing discursive paradigms to settle down:

The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the *name* of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation. And it is the very authority of culture as a knowledge of referential truth which is at issue in the concept and moment of *enunciation*.⁵⁵

This Third Space of enunciation allows a free play of meanings and cultural identities, which could lead to the realization that cultures are neither unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistically enmeshed in hierarchical relations of the self and the other. The cultural uncertainty and representational undecidability that the Third Space initiates allows for the liberation of cultures from the structures of power that always qualify them. This disruptive nature of

enunciation within the Third Space displaces the homogeneous, temporal narrative of the West.⁵⁶ And it is within this ambivalent and contradictory space that Bhabha wants to locate himself as well. The Third-World intellectual in the First World is always attempting such a negotiation to extricate himself from pervasive hegemonic strategies within the academy. It is such a space of translation, a third or alternative space, which would allow him a movement outside the anxiety of appropriation. Thus, although Bhabha has diverged considerably from Edward Said in his attempts at disruption and negation, like Said he also eventually moves towards a process of understanding and articulation. Said's movement from opposition to resistance perhaps culminates in Bhabha's attempts at the creation of a Third Space where there is an ultimate dissolution of all hierarchical differences and a consequent, democratic realization of an essential hybridity that is symptomatic of any attempt at representation:

...a willingness to descend into that alien territory—where I have led you—may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.⁵⁷

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2. Robert Young, 'The Ambivalence of Bhabha' in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990; rpt. 1993), p.146.
3. For a discussion on Bhabha's concept of hybridity and its implications on agency, and vice-versa see Homi Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency' in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994; rpt. 2004), pp.245-82.
4. Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism' in *The Location of Culture*, pp.94-120.
5. Bhabha, 'The Other Question' in *The Location of Culture*, p.101.
6. For Said's concept of 'latent' and 'manifest' Orientalisms see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2001), pp.201-25.
7. Jean Baudrillard has discussed how as soon as the 'other' can be represented, it can be appropriated and controlled. See Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities... Or the End of the Social, and Other Essays*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnston (New York: Foreign Agents Series, 1983), pp.20-2.

8. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp.58-9.
9. Ibid., p.59.
10. Bhabha, 'The Other Question' in *The Location of Culture*, p.109.
11. Ibid., pp.109-10.
12. See, for example, Homi K. Bhabha, 'Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism' in *Literature, Politics and Theory. Papers from the Essex Conference, 1976-1984*, ed. Francis Barker et al (London: Methuen, 1986), pp.194-211.
13. Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' in *The Location of Culture*, p.122.
14. Ibid., p.123.
15. T.B. Macaulay, 'Minute on Education' in *Sources of Indian Tradition, vol. II*, ed. W. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p.49.
16. Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; rpt. 2002), p.51.
17. Sisir Kumar Das, *Sahibs and Munshis: An Account of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1978), p.107.
18. Sigmund Freud, 'The Unconscious' as quoted in Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man' in *The Location of Culture*, p.127.

19. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man' in *The Location of Culture*. p.128.
20. Sisir Kumar Mitra, *The Liberator: Sri Aurobindo, India and the World* (Delhi: Jaico, 1954), p.24.
21. Government of India, Home Department, Political File No.13, June 1908, Note on Aravinda Acroyd Ghose by A. Wood, ICS. This and some other references about Aurobindo in this chapter were derived from Asish Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy*.
22. Mitra, *The Liberator*, p.26. Aurobindo was eleventh in the open competition of 1890, twenty-third in the first periodical examination, and thirty-seventh in the final examination. See, Government of India, Judicial and Public File 1396 of 1892.
23. See, *ibid.*, p.34.
24. Aurobindo Ghose in *Bhavani Mandir*, trans. Sisir Kumar Mitra, *The Liberator*, p.48.
25. Bhabha, 'The Other Question', pp.103-4.
26. *Ibid.*, p.101.
27. A good discussion on the *Markandaya Purana* can be found in J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (1920; Varanasi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1967), pp.150-1. On the Tantras in general see Sir John Woodroffe [Arthur Avalon, pseudo.], *Principles of Tantra*, 2vols. (Madras, 1960), pp.212ff.

28. Aurobindo Ghose, *Bhawani Mandir*, rpt. in A.B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1926)*, 2nd edition (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1960), pp.88-9. The entire pamphlet has been reprinted in A.B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1964), pp.84-97.
29. Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1974; rpt. 1979), p.113.
30. Homi Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation' in Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990; rpt. 1995), p.300.
31. There is much debate about the nature of such a mythographic nationalism. While statist historiography has wanted to see nationalism as essentially a secular enterprise, historians of the subaltern valorize an ahistorical notion of Indian religion as the only authentic site of nationalist resistance. Dipesh Chakrabarty has drawn our attention to the 'remarkable failure of intellect' in Sumit Sarkar's book on the subject whenever it addresses the question of religion. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories and the Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of Subaltern Studies' in *Economic and Political Weekly* (8 April 1995), p.753. See also Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973), p.316.
32. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man' in *The Location of Culture*, p.131.

33. Bhabha borrows this expression from Stuart Hall who used it to describe the role of 'imagining' or representation in the practice of politics, in his response to the British election of 1987. See Stuart Hall, 'Blue Election, Election Blues' in *Marxism Today* (July 1987), pp.30-5.
34. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, pp.29-30.
35. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value' in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.154-75. Spivak's essay, however, veers towards feminism and the question of the marginal woman labour, in the end.
36. There is a fine discussion by Partha Chatterjee on the implications of nationalism as a strategy in postmodern times, and differences in its theoretical implications in the European and non-European worlds. See Partha Chatterjee, 'Nationalism as a Problem in the History of Political Ideas' in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* compiled in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.1-35.
37. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.30.
38. Ibid., pp.30-1.
39. Ibid., p.31.
40. Ibid., p.32.

41. For a discussion on this see Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.294-321.
42. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.32.
43. For a discussion on the presence of the imaginary in the realm of the political see Hall, 'Blue Election, Election Blues' in *Marxism Today*, pp.30-5.
44. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.33.
45. Ibid., p.33.
46. Ibid., p.35.
47. For Bhabha's idea about political judgement being the problem of finding a form of public rhetoric able to represent different and opposing political contents he is indebted to John Stuart Mill. See J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty' in *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government* (London: Dent and Sons, 1972), pp.93-4.
48. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.36.
49. Ibid., p.37.
50. Ibid., p.38.

51. For this idea of a mixed milieu as a site of dialogue and exchange Bhabha is indebted to Rodolphe Gasché. See R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), especially Chapter 6.
52. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.39.
53. Ibid., p.46.
54. Ibid., p.49.
55. Ibid., pp.50-1.
56. For a detailed discussion on this see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), Chapter 2.
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CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND ANXIETY: A MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE POSTMODERN

Representation: The Basic Thrust

In the preceding analysis of some of the works of Edward W. Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha I have tried to locate their discursive position within the First-World academia. In spite of the many and consistent critique of their works, it cannot be denied that they have considerably influenced the study of literary and social theory in their own ways. An analysis of their writings also reveals a process of development of their respective positions within the existent theoretical paradigm.

Although Said had based a part of his critique on Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci to a large extent, he also had pronounced humanist influences such as Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach.¹ Thus, in a way, Said was one of those already dwindling group of intellectuals who, although they were moving into the problematics (and therefore the necessity) of the politics of representation, still believed in the existence of a unitary consensus somewhere, a dichotomic sense of right and wrong, or virtue and vice. The movement away was perhaps inevitable and necessary as well, but Said has never been apologetic about the sometimes contradictory positions that he has assumed. In

the 'Afterword' to his book *Orientalism* Said has raised and discussed this point succinctly:

Yet among American and British academics of a decidedly rigorous and unyielding stripe, *Orientalism*, and indeed all of my other work, has come in for disapproving attacks because of its residual "humanism", its theoretical inconsistencies, its insufficient, perhaps even sentimental, treatment of agency. I am glad that it has! *Orientalism* is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine...What I tried to preserve in my analysis of *Orientalism* was its combination of consistency *and* inconsistency, its play, so to speak, which can only be rendered by preserving for oneself as writer and critic the right to some emotional force, the right to be moved, angered, surprised and even delighted.²

What is most interesting, however, about Said's 'humanism' is in the manner in which he has endorsed the growing out of it into a dialectical post-structuralist position that his successors have assumed. On the one hand, he feels the need for a humanist 'emotional force' that is part of his critical self; while on the other hand he realizes how the arbitrary position of his successors is perhaps a necessity to counter the rigorous and essentialist theoretical machinery that is still used by the Western academy:

...the work of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Ashis Nandy, predicated on the sometimes dizzying subjective relationships engendered by colonialism,

cannot be gainsaid for *its* contribution to our understanding of the humanistic traps laid by systems such as Orientalism.³

One might therefore say that the publication of Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 was a defining moment in more ways than one. It is unnecessary to discuss here the impact that the book had on anti-essentialist agenda throughout the world. The more relevant point is how Said's work, in its mixture of humanism and anti-humanism, laid open a space where other intellectuals from the Third World could sow and reap. Said's book acted as a catalyst in making these intellectuals realize that they had a valid, cogent voice that could even be subjectively representative. The implicit subjectivity that we consistently discover in both Spivak and Bhabha is perhaps a continuation of the humanist spirit that Said had generated; whereas the theoretically sound yet arbitrary nature of their work is born out of a confidence in their respective representative values which engendered a post-structuralist evasiveness that goes beyond Said. I have already discussed how Said's approach to the problem of representation was very different from some of his predecessors such as A.L. Tibawi, Syed Hussein Alatas, Anouar Abdel-Malek who had initially analysed the problem. He was also considerably removed from later scholars such as Abdullah Laroui or Talal Asad or K.N. Pannikar. The primary difference lay in the fact that Said moved beyond the basic problematic of the representation of Islam, into the larger one of the representation of the East as a whole. He was opening up new disciplinary possibilities in Third-World representation.

It is this systematic approach practised by Said that was picked up by later scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha.

However, as already mentioned, there was a striking difference between Said and his two able contemporaries. While Said was trying to reconcile his two critical selves—the humanist scholar on the one hand and the anti-humanist critic of Western essentialism on the other—both Spivak and Bhabha had moved into different categories of representation. By the time either of these two intellectuals had really addressed the problem of representation, anti-humanist modes of theorizing were already in fashion. In order that they might get a foothold in the American academia, they had to take up and practise these new critical methods. Thus although both of them had great admiration and respect for Edward Said, and considered him to be one of their major influences they gradually moved into newer and more fashionable forms of representation (or non-representation). This is of course not to say that they were inclined towards particular forms of theorizing only because these were in vogue. This was a conscious choice, I presume, after much deliberation, as anti-humanism threw up many possibilities of representation that could not have been imagined by Said when he had begun to write.

The Departure from Edward Said: A Crucial Moment

The departure from conventional modes of critiquing by these new icons of postcolonial theorizing came under much scrutiny both from the West and the East. This was

obviously an interesting location. Homi Bhabha has spoken about hybridity. Theirs is a hybrid, median location that is criticized by both sides of the divide. Particularly interesting is the way in which Arif Dirlik attacks this new breed of intellectuals by re-defining the word 'postcolonial'. It is clear how he looks upon postcolonialism as another essentialist project. He believes that all the intellectuals who are now termed 'postcolonial' were already present in the socio-academic scene subsumed under the category 'Third World':

Now that postcoloniality has been released from the fixity of Third World location, the identity of the postcolonial is no longer structural but discursive. Postcolonial in this perspective represents an attempt to regroup intellectuals of uncertain location under the banner of postcolonial discourse. Intellectuals in the flesh may produce the themes that constitute postcolonial discourse, but it is participation in the discourse that defines them as postcolonial intellectuals. Hence it is important to delineate the discourse so as to identify postcolonial intellectuals themselves.⁴

The phrase 'uncertain location', used by Dirlik, is a qualifier that needs special attention. This is the point of departure of the new breed of postcolonial intellectuals. For Marxist practitioners like Dirlik, this uncertainty is most unnerving. In fact, the acerbic tone that is evident in the above extract is an insinuation towards the insincerity of these postcolonial intellectuals. He easily relates their diffuse

presence with the strategies of global capitalism and clever First-World politicking, and is deeply angered by the very term 'postcolonial'. The uncertainty that is symptomatic of such a hybrid group of thinkers and theorists makes Dirlik wonder about the possibility of a representative agenda that can form the basis of a so-called postcolonial movement. He looks at the entire postcolonial agenda less as a consolidated protest movement than as a convenient policy of survival of these intellectuals within the First-World academy. He finds it absurd that the politics of postcoloniality should club together such politically disparate intellectuals as Edward Said, Aijaz Ahmad, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Lata Mani.⁵ Dirlik categorically expresses his strong distrust in the very possibility of conceptualization of such a term as 'postcolonial':

...the popularity that the term *postcolonial* has achieved in the last few years has less to do with its rigorousness as a concept or with the new vistas it has opened up for critical inquiry that it does with the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World origin as pacesetters in cultural criticism...it was only from the mid-1980s [that] these so-called postcolonial intellectuals seemed to acquire an academic respectability that they did not have before.⁶

That is to say he views the entire postcolonial project as a process of the Third-World intellectual gaining political and academic (and, Dirlik does not forget to mention, economic)

mileage in the First World. To rub his point in he even refers to a 1985 interview of Gayatri Spivak where she had insisted how she did not belong to the 'top level of the United States academy' because she taught in the South and the Southwest rather than in the North-eastern seaboard or the West coast which were for the elite.⁷ In his endnote Dirlik does not forget to add that since then Spivak had moved to Columbia University.

This debate, however, cannot be reduced to the simplistic argument about privileged locations and/or economic advantages. Neither is this a case of trying to shove off a fellow academic who is suddenly and undeservedly making it big in the profession. Dirlik's attack on the agenda of postcolonial critical practice is one that is born out of a deep-seated theoretical scepticism. It is a repudiation of post-foundational history from the perspective of a Marxist, foundational practitioner of theory. Dirlik's critique comes out of a certain sense of insecurity and the despondency at the sudden success of a post-foundationalist bias in the study and practice of literary and cultural theory. He finds this insincere and fails to comprehend the possibility of the existence of such rootless theorizing. Indeed, if we view things from his perspective there is little chance of success of postcolonial theory in its attempts at resisting essentialist strategies of the West, and hence his dismissive tone. We shall come back to this discussion once again, as arguments and counter-arguments on this will form the backbone of this chapter. But before that let me put both

Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha in perspective vis-à-vis the current debate.

Gayatri Spivak's Strategy of Abrupt Intervention

I have already discussed in the chapter on Gayatri Spivak how she attempts pluralistic re-negotiations of Western modes of essentialist readings. Through sophisticated textual strategies and linguistic tools like catachresis or reconstellation she tries to bring out aporias within hegemonic formations. No wonder, the study of history has always remained one of her chief concerns. It is through abrupt, interventionist procedures that Spivak tries to prise open the truth about history and its disciplinary formations. As a seasoned practitioner of deconstruction she has used its tools to perfection, although, as I have discussed, there are subtle differences between her strategy and those of the Anglo-American school of deconstruction per se. Time and again, Spivak has insisted on the necessity of the deconstructive mode of approach while negotiating identity. That is so because it is through a process of appropriating identity that a discursive historical model is usually set up by the power centre. She states how deconstruction is not a strategy to negate either subjecthood, or truth, or history. It is only against the privileging of certain identities over others, a tool that exposes error. It looks into 'how truths are produced'.⁸

Thus, gradually, she attempts at a disruption of all foundational models of knowledge—that include not only history and literature but questions about individual identity

and subject-positions. While consistently questioning location and its discursive parameters, Spivak incessantly relocates her self, and this continuous re-location is a way of evading essentialist identities. Since the expression 'Third-World intellectuals' has been applied to Spivak and her lot almost from the moment of her arrival in the First World, she has gradually grown sceptical about its use as well. She understands the need for expressions such as 'Third World', but simultaneously realizes the identitarian trap that is implicit within such a bracket. So, according to her, this new-found sense of solidarity in terms of counter-epistemic knowledge productions, although important, needs to be viewed with some caution: 'Perhaps even because, in the very locus of their struggle, they have an interest in dominant global capitalism'.⁹ This is very interesting. One does not fail to notice the self-reflexive overtone in the above lines. Solidarity is fine. But while on the one hand there is the possibility of labelling and essentialization, on the other hand there is the more alarming condition of the Third-World intellectual himself/herself succumbing willingly to the strategies of appropriation of the globalized academic market by using this label.

What strikes us immediately is the similarity between Spivak's argument and Dirlik's critique of their (Spivak and company) position in his essay. It is in this same context that Dirlik expressed his scepticism about the term postcolonial:

Postcolonial is the most recent entrant to achieve prominent visibility in the ranks of those 'post'

marked words (seminal among them, *postmodernism*) that serves as signposts in(to) contemporary cultural criticism. Unlike other 'post' marked words, *postcolonial* claims as its special provenance the terrain that in an earlier day used to go by the name of Third World.¹⁰

He views this as a project of authenticating the marginal cultural discourses from across the world, and bringing the entire project of culture out of the Euro-American box of dominance and discursivity. In short, he feels that the terms 'Third World' and 'postcolonial' are interchangeable, and hence the latter is redundant. He also smells economic and political mileage in the unnecessary glorification/authentication of the term 'postcolonial', and discovers in it a politics deeper than the singular need for representation.

The point that Dirlik is perhaps missing is that the term 'postcolonial' will also be on its way out in terms of the strategy that Spivak or Bhabha have assumed. A follower of Jacques Derrida, Spivak will always try to move out of this fixated, closed, identitarian space and move out into the ambivalence of counter-essentialist strategies that refuse all labels or assume all of them at the same time. Writing becomes, for her, a self-separating project, where she continually displaces herself from the body writing, thereby continuously moving away from a representable subject-position. It is not so abstract or impossible as foundationalist theoreticians might believe. Spivak herself talks about

Samuel Beckett in this context—about how the playwright distances himself from the mire of language. This is Beckett's attempt, Spivak presumes, to 'clear a space, step away, spit out the mother tongue, write in French'.¹¹ A movement away from one's agenda, a suppression of one's 'individual' or personal voice is a way of trying to avoid appropriation. The metaphors of identity and voice can easily be subsumed or essentialized—a careful strategy to suppress the agenda by celebrating the voice. This is why Spivak consciously and incessantly wriggles out of all attempts at identifying or locating her. Rather than identity, she is more interested in the question of space, the opening up of a tentative space from where to articulate. She wants to steer clear of powerful concept-metaphors of identity and voice, as she inevitably sees them being subsumed by more powerful interest groups that would once again make the woman-question secondary. The clearing of space is merely 'a self-separating project' that keeps the politics intact, and does not in any way, bring in questions of identity or voice within it.¹² It simply creates a perspective for the individual.

Spivak is thus incessantly slipping out of attempts at politicizing her location. What is her theoretical location? Is she a Marxist, or a feminist, or a deconstructionist? Is she postcolonial? Or, for that matter, Third-World? These are questions she consistently evades—and she practises all of these at the same time. This is where Dirlik is perhaps mistaken in believing that all 'post' marked words are used to 'achieve an authentic globalization of discourses'. Spivak moves out of this entire logic of 'authenticity', because the

word itself presumes a discursive centre. There are no authentications or licences, but continuous space-shifts, quantum leaps across multiple planes of representation. We need to understand how it is also a movement out of narcissistic individualism, as Dirlik seems to think, into a hybrid, heterogeneous political space that perpetually eludes identity and representation.

Moving beyond Discipline

I have already discussed in the chapter on Spivak how she has grown increasingly impatient with feminists such as Julia Kristeva. Her primary argument against Anglo-American academic feminism has been the way it has allowed itself to be consumed by essentialist agency, by increasingly situating itself within the ambit of academic theorizing. The solid disciplinary foundation of academic feminism has given it some prestige within the university, but what it has compromised in the process is its quality of abrupt intervention and consequently the basic agenda of protest. Not surprisingly, Spivak blames bourgeois feminism 'because of a blindness to the *multinational* theater' and sees it being 'fostered by the dominant ideology'.¹³ In this same essay Spivak elucidates how in its tendency to generalize, bourgeois feminism becomes complicit with exploitative and conspiratorial multinational agencies (she gives the example of *Control Data*), ultimately relegating the woman question to the background.

Spivak's intention in critiquing bourgeois feminism is to show how a settlement into academic disciplines and

framed parameters is to defeat the cause of representation. The homogeneity of a departmental categorization, a settlement in the plush corridors of polemical academia is symptomatic of allowing essences to devour you. The urge to generate 'systems' of thought, paradigms of development, a syllabus for academic pursuit are traps that lead to generalizations and pervasive assumptions. In its stead is needed guerrilla intervention, a sudden spurting of aporetic knots that find the power centre surprised and vulnerable. It is to practise different forms of understanding and changing, subtle substitutions of parameters, that would bring the woman out of set categories of truth and make her identity 'arbitrary, situational'.¹⁴ This 'moment by moment' spatial vacillation is how Spivak proposes a movement beyond essences, even beyond the problem of representation; because representation as a political discourse is ultimately sucked within the paradigm of discipline. Here she discovers the usefulness of deconstructive practice, the reversal-displacement morphology of deconstruction that realizes the immediacy of the historical moment. Intervention at the moment is imperative in order that the discursive logic of disciplinary hegemony might be challenged. It is through such a strategy that the essentialist collation of the concepts of gender, race, and class can be suitably resisted. The idea, for her, is to react to the situation at hand in an arbitrary and contingent manner. It is such a deconstructive approach that 'will not allow the establishment of a hegemonic "global theory" of feminism'¹⁵. This is where the position of the female postcolonial intellectual vis-à-vis Western cultural

theory becomes interesting. There is always the risk of complicity, and hence the strategy of moving beyond disciplines through deconstruction. Spivak was quick to realize how bourgeois feminism could easily seduce the non-Western academic into what might be blatantly Eurocentric values and assumptions. Thus what goes by the name of 'International Feminism' is actually nothing more than a patronizing mission of intervention of the West, and its discursive engagement with the Third-World woman. As Bart Moore-Gilbert writes:

Kristeva's interest in the Oriental subaltern woman is, for Spivak, an example *par excellence* of the manner in which the involvement of First World intellectuals in the Third World actually functions self-interestedly as a process of self-constitution.¹⁶

The Subaltern Historians

This is one of the reasons why Spivak perhaps praises the agenda of the Subaltern School of historians.¹⁷ In their attempt at revisionist historiography they have consistently highlighted the role of subaltern agency in bringing both colonial and national-bourgeois historiography to crisis. That is to say, that the subaltern historians challenge the basic paradigm of 'change' that is symptomatic in the study of history as a discipline. The history of colonialism in India is seen as a change from semi-feudalism to capitalist subjection, which in its turn is challenged by bourgeois-nationalism. Spivak sees in the subaltern historians an attempt to bring the study of history out of this rather

simplistic pattern of the mode-of-production narrative. This new theorization basically constitutes two things. First, to see history as a narrative of confrontation rather than one of transition. This entails an understanding of history in terms of a narrative of domination and exploitation, rather than as a smooth passage within the modes-of-production narrative. And second, to notice how this change is marked by a functional change in sign-systems, the most important being the change from the religious to the militant.

The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'.¹⁸

So, this pluralist approach and the condition of confrontational historicity releases history, at least partially, from disciplinary hegemony—both from the clutches of colonialism and bourgeois nationalism. On the other hand, the location of the subaltern as insurgent unsettles the set dimensions of history as an academic discipline, creating aporetic knots at the point of enunciation. It is in this kind of abrupt interventionism that Spivak sees the success of a deconstructive approach—a complete relegation and dismissal of disciplinary formations.

Spivak gives us interesting examples of such deconstructive insurgency in the course of her discussion. At one point in the essay she discusses 'rumour' as a form of insurgent writing of history as explicated by Ranajit Guha.¹⁹ She argues that the mindset of the peasant is as likely to be guided by the oral tradition (*sruti*, or that which is heard) as

the mindset of the historian by the phonocentrism of Western linguistics. There is no reason to privilege one over the other. Also, the functional immediacy of rumour as a spoken utterance makes it 'plural', not belonging to any one voice-consciousness. It evokes a comradeship and belongs to everybody, without any assignable origin or source:

This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency...Subaltern, elite authority, and critic of historiography become complicit here.²⁰

It is this kind of 'writing' that creates the necessary space for a non-discursive mapping of discipline. The presence of the subaltern consciousness engenders a dialectical fracture in the transitive manner of historical development dependent on the almost simplistic modes-of-production narrative. The deliberate validation of rumour as history is an interventionist strategy by the subaltern historian to establish the subaltern as the subject of history, a disturbing and problematic reinscription that persistently questions disciplinary formations. What this kind of reinscription does is to acknowledge that 'the arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian.'²¹ This aspect of the Subaltern Studies project, the heterogeneous counter-disciplinary movement of re-'writing' history interests Spivak as she finds in it her own strategy of affirmative deconstruction.

However, one cannot presume that Spivak is entirely happy with the group's project of re-writing history. She sees

in their attempt at restoring the subaltern voice a contextual dissociation which can be sustained if overdone. The Subaltern Studies historians locate the subaltern problematic in complete isolation from both the colonizing formation and other sectors of local society, such as the native elite, to which it is obviously, even if differentially linked. What they search for in their project is a 'pure' or 'essential' subalternity that can establish itself as a separate, independent and constitutive paradigm of historical agency. Their project seems to hint at or approach a 'truth' that can be reached independently of discursive colonial paradigms. This is the kind of epistemic fracture that Gayatri Spivak is sceptical about. This claim of an independent, objective logic of authenticity and the incessant reinscription of the bourgeois humanist model of subaltern agency reveal how the group succumbs to the regime of knowledge and authority that is symptomatic of the logic of colonialism itself. The movement of these historians towards a positional certitude by negating both the colonial and the national, becomes for Spivak an alarming movement towards a closure, and thereby a validation of the discursive logic of discipline.

In spite of their doctrine of resistance, however, Spivak discovers reasons to stand by them. Although there are certain inherent and pronounced 'cognitive failures' in the work of these historians of the Subaltern (that I have already discussed in Chapter Three), Spivak feels that they should be lauded in their efforts to explore the experience of the most marginal social groups, whereas nationalist

historiography has been mostly concerned with writing the history of the local elite. The project of Western historiography has also been qualified by the important factor of accessibility—be it Marxist, or feminist, or liberalist.²² They have consistently arrived at sweeping essentialist conclusions with limited access to the Third World and limited regard to the interiority of the problem.²³ It is in this context that Spivak regards the intervention by Subaltern historiographers so topical and necessary.

However, Spivak also discovers reasons to stand by the 'pure' or 'essential' form of historical agency that the Subaltern historians propose. She suggests that this idea of the 'pure' and accessible subaltern consciousness is a necessary theoretical fiction that performs a critique of the hegemonic historical formations of colonial historiography on the one hand, and elite national-bourgeois historiography on the other. This she views as the '*strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest',²⁴—a piece of fictional construct that attempts to undo 'a massive historiographic metalepsis and "situate" the effect of the subject as subaltern'.²⁵ This makes their strategy similar to that of Marx (fetishization), Nietzsche (genealogy), Foucault (counter-memory), Barthes (semiotrophy) and Derrida (affirmative deconstruction). This is the way, she perceives, the Subaltern historians can use anti-humanism as a strategy. Thus she views 'subaltern consciousness' as a synthetic whole, an imaginary construct that is necessary for warding off discursive domination. This becomes a clever strategy, she presumes, to counter the enterprise of inclusivity

practised by either Western or national elite historiography. Spivak emphasizes how there are plenty of indications within the writings of the Subaltern Studies Group that they are concerned with 'consciousness not in general, but in [the] crucial narrow sense'.²⁶

The Subaltern as 'Space'

In the discourse of subalternity, therefore, Spivak searches for and discovers a wholly 'othered' consciousness that transcends the paradigms of a modes-of-production narrative. This narrow and fetishized consciousness that the Subaltern Studies Group approaches, frustrates the dynamics of appropriation of the 'benevolent' modern Western intellectual. What the subaltern historian has tried to do is to push history to its limits, towards that moment of politics where the differential between theory and practice tends to zero. And within this ever-vacillating reference frame—an abstract, hydra-headed, heterogeneous moment of historicity—the disciplinary historian fails to narrativize history. The idea of narrativizing history, which forms the core of the discipline of history, is thus held contingent in such practise. The idea of subaltern historiography is to hold the disciplinary programme of history at the limit of the narrative, so that it tells the story although keeping it arbitrary and contingent at the same moment. Indeed it is a hard lesson to learn, but not to learn it is merely 'to nominate elegant solutions to be correct theoretical practice. When has history ever contradicted that practice norms theory, as

subaltern practice norms official historiography in this case?’²⁷

This Spivak sees as the positive triumph of the Subaltern School. In the course of their practise of historiography they have been able to create, consciously (or unconsciously) an independent, alternative space that exists for and within itself. The subaltern logic sometimes seems not to be a part of the global economy at all. It speaks of a micrologized subject-position that is both the moment of theory and practice, neither more privileged than the other. It is this eclectic view of the moment of history that is crucial for the ultimate negation of the disciplinary, discursive parameters of conventional historicity.

Obviously, this moment of history has its own flaws. The very conception of such a moment is theoretical fiction as I have already explicated. A moment in history where discipline is thrown off-guard, where discursive narrativization is frozen is the ideal moment to transcend the power/knowledge dynamic. It is perhaps at this moment that Spivak conceives of the subaltern as ‘wholly Other’—as the radically different which reveals the horizon or limits of Western systems of knowledge. Although it is a moment of epistemic fracture, one must never forget that it is a well thought-out theoretical moment. It is not as if that all ‘otherness’es can be casually appended to this moment, in which case it loses its potency, its tremendous force of counter-discursivity. As Spivak writes:

Subalternity is the name I borrow for the space out of any serious touch with the logic of capitalism or socialism...Please do not confuse it with unorganized labour, women as such, the proletarian, the colonized, the object of ethnography, migrant labour, political refugees etc. Nothing useful comes out of this confusion.²⁸

Thus, although this is a moment of theoretical intervention that might be fictional in conception, it is effective in its political import. It is both abrupt and exact at the moment of intervening into discursive historiography. At the same time it is history *as* the moment of difference.

In Spivak's interpretation of Subaltern historiography it thus becomes very theoretical and sophisticated, a dialogic moment of difference that unsettles the structures of academic power. However, some Subaltern historians have not taken kindly to Spivak's appropriation of this school of historical thinking and writing. Sumit Sarkar, one of the early practitioners of this school of thought, for example, is mildly but categorically disturbed by her 'intervention':

In the name of theory, then, a tendency emerged towards essentializing the categories of 'subaltern' and 'autonomy', in the sense of assigning to them more or less absolute, fixed, decontextualized meanings and qualities. That there had been such elements of 'essentialism', 'teleology' and epistemological naivete in the quest for the subaltern subject has naturally not escaped the notice of recent

postmodernistically inclined admirers. They tend, however, to blame such aberrations on Marxist residues...What is conveniently forgotten is that the problems do not disappear through a simple substitution of 'class' by 'subaltern' or 'community'...The handling of the new concepts, further, may remain equally naïve. The intervention of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, we shall see, has not changed things much in this respect for the bulk of later *Subaltern Studies* work, except in purely verbal terms.²⁹

From the point of view of the Marxist historian, Sarkar might have a point in his scepticism. The detachment of the subaltern condition from socio-economic contexts and determinants might well be a postmodern attempt at an erasure of economic reductionism. As Sarkar insists, reifying tendencies might be actually strengthened by this forced detachment. But the point that he perhaps misses is that this theoretical sophistication locates the subaltern condition at a moment beyond closure. What Spivak is attempting through the subaltern agency is an affirmative deconstruction of hegemonic historiography. She uses her strategy of abrupt intervention as an effective tool to subvert the logic of discourse, even if this is a certain movement towards the subversive dynamic of postmodernism.

The other relevant point is that, there is perhaps a deliberate movement towards reification on the part of the Third-World intellectuals like Spivak or Bhabha. The

subaltern location can be seen as a metaphor (or metonymy) for the location of these intellectuals in the US academia. Thus, on a more symbolic level than Sarkar can perhaps admit from his conventional Marxist position, the reification becomes a state of non-location—a state of perpetual ambivalence for the Third-World intellectual. Of course, this position is undeniably postmodern in its implication. As Spivak has noted, their representation of the underclass and consistent engagement with the themes of agency and exploitation on a level beyond the merely economic/cultural is a strategy of not being ‘confined within fantasmatic and divisive cultural boundaries’—that are essentialist traps laid by the First World.³⁰

Homi Bhabha: A Consolidation of Postmodern Strategy

Gayatri Spivak’s strategy of catachrestic intervention and a movement beyond disciplinary boundaries was taken up in right earnest by Homi Bhabha, and I have already laid out in the previous chapter, how he plans out his strategy of ‘negotiation’ by politicizing the moment of enunciation. The sophistication inherent in Bhabha’s strategies is symptomatic of the Third-World intellectual who has safely ‘arrived’ in the First World and is trying to revise and re-negotiate his position within the Western academia. Bhabha reeks of a confidence and deliberation that is a far cry from the newly arrived Third-World, non-White subject who finds, as Aijaz Ahmad has succinctly pointed out, the Western academy as ‘a place of desolation, even panic;’³¹ Bhabha is the seasoned postcolonial subject, versed in theoretical strategies,

ensconced safely in the First-World academy—interventionist and disruptive. He incessantly vacillates between positions, negating all notions of fixity, thereby thwarting any essentialist reference frame where the First World might try to situate him. In a way it might be said that Bhabha is the most successful postmodernist entrant into the First World from the Third. Of course there are very many powerful critiques of Bhabha's position from his own part of the world, but before I go into that I would like to discuss the politics of Bhabha's location.

The Critique of Modernity

The basic premise from which Bhabha's theoretical enterprise takes off is the critique of Western modernity. The typical aspect of most of Bhabha's writings is that he has tried to re-articulate postcolonialism through postmodernity and vice-versa. In order that he could successfully do this, his primary attempt was to segregate the enterprise of postmodernity from the discursive formations of modernity. There were basically two Western narratives of modernity. The first argued that a movement toward the postmodern was an inevitable fallout of the catastrophic events of the twentieth century, namely the two World Wars. The project of modernity that was inaugurated by the Enlightenment had thus fizzled out midway to give way to a less deterministic postmodernism. The other narrative, promulgated chiefly by Richard Rorty talks about a successful completion of the project of modernity with the global triumph of the Western models of social democracy and economic organization—

and hence a smooth flow into the subsequent narrative of postmodernity.³²

Bhabha is deeply sceptical about such attempts at cognitive reductionism in the relation of the human being to the social world. He seems to be much more inclined to the way in which Jurgen Habermas, or Michel Foucault, or Jean-Francois Lyotard look at the problem. Bhabha writes:

My interest in the question of modernity resides in the influential discussion generated by the work of Habermas, Foucault, Lyotard and Lefort, amongst many others, that has generated a critical discourse around historical modernity as an epistemological structure. To put it succinctly, the question of ethical and cultural judgement, central to the processes of subject formation and the objectification of social knowledge, is challenged at its 'cognitivist' core.³³

This is not the same 'cognition' that Spivak talks about in her essay on the Subaltern historians. Their deliberate cognitive failure could have been a strategy against essentialism. This failure of cognition, or rather a movement toward objectification is less deliberate and more like an inertial discursive superiority that disturbs the Third-World intellectuals like Bhabha. Bhabha suggests that the contemporary world has not yet arrived at a new cultural dispensation whereby we might assume that modernity has been epistemologically successful. This is most obvious in the way in which the social, political and economic structures promulgated by the West, along with its various

forms of ideological 'othering' have continued within the paradigms of modernity. Bhabha notes with dismay how 'the language of rights and obligations, so central to the modern myth of a people, must be questioned on the basis of an anomalous and discriminatory legal and cultural status assigned to migrant, diasporic and refugee populations. Inevitably they find themselves on the frontiers between cultures and nations, often on the other side of the law'.³⁴ This is of course a direct invective against assumptions of homogeneity about the non-West within the Western historiographic enterprise. Secondly, modernity cannot be assumed to be 'complete', and hence move into postmodernity, since the role of the non-Western world in the constitution of modernity has never been acknowledged. The foundational ideologues of 'Western' modernity—such as 'Man', 'reason', 'progress' or the 'nation' have consistently othered the non-West and treated it as 'premodern' and hence outside the purview of historiography.

A Postmodern Postcoloniality

Bhabha, therefore, was satisfied neither with the Enlightenment logic of incomplete modernity, nor Rorty's argument of the completion of modernity, while moving into the logic of postmodernism. Bhabha sees the postmodern condition necessarily as a problematic of culture. His entire logic of 'enunciation' or 'translation' thus stems from his idea of 'cultural difference', and thus is, for him, the central concern of postmodernism.³⁵ Modernism has always seen

culture as 'continuity', an exchange between an authentic 'past' and a living 'present'. Bhabha surreptitiously discovers an aporetic knot within this modernist logic by suggesting that culture is 'an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival'.³⁶ This is where the question of postcolonial agency comes in.³⁷ On the one hand, culture is a complete semiotic system that speaks of diverse experiences like literature, art, music, ritual, life, death; on the other hand it has a transnational dimension where it involves migration, diaspora, displacement, or relocation. The very complex fabric of culture should thus, according to Bhabha, resist the simplistic pattern of binary opposition between the Third World and the First World—an essentialist and holistic form of social explanation. The postcolonial perspective needs to emphasize the fluidity of cultural boundaries and the impossibility of fixed definitions. As Bhabha writes, culture is both transnational and translational:

It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourse are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the 'middle passage' of slavery and indenture, the 'voyage out' of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement—now accompanied by the territorial

ambitions of 'global' media technologies—make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by *culture*, a rather complex issue.³⁸

It is in this context that Bhabha wants to examine the discursive conditions of agency, closure, intentionality, or totalization. Any counter-movement against these needs to be initiated in terms beyond modernity (and its sometimes simplistic assumptions), and this is why, perhaps, Bhabha's postcolonial critique veers inevitably towards postmodernism.

The sense of a cultural community evoked in such modernist ideas as 'cultural diversity' is more often than not a cunning ploy to hide historical ironies, or disjunctive temporalities or representational aporia that are symptomatic of the development of a modern West. The history of colonialism or bourgeois nationalism throughout the world is replete with such callous essentializations that modernism has, in a way, endorsed. For example, in his essay 'The Nation and its Peasants', Partha Chatterjee has discussed the relation between the Indian nation and its peasantry during the anti-colonial struggle. Although this is not strictly a question of culture, the basic gap between the elite and the subaltern consciousness is evident in the analysis. Chatterjee analyses how the dynamics of the involvement of the peasant force in the anti-colonial struggles was not governed either by the Indian elite or by the nationalist consciousness aroused by the Congress leadership of the times.³⁹ The mass movement of the peasants had a sense of arbitrariness about

it. And Chatterjee notes in this tendency an interesting coming together of two domains of politics:

On the one hand was the domain of the formally organized political parties and associations, moving within the institutional processes of the bourgeois state forms introduced by colonial rule and seeking to use their representative power over the mass of the people to replace the colonial state by a bourgeois nation-state. On the other hand was the domain of peasant politics where beliefs and actions did not fit into the grid of 'interests' and 'aggregation of interests' that constituted the world of bourgeois representative politics. Seen from the former domain, the latter could appear only as the realm of spontaneity, which was of course nothing more than the acknowledgement that the specific determinants of the domain of peasant political activity remained incomprehensible from the standpoint of bourgeois politics.⁴⁰

This is the point that Bhabha is also trying to make. The development of modernity and its paradigms of agency, either colonialist or national-bourgeois are essentially collusive in nature. What they leave out (consciously or unconsciously) are aporetic knots carefully picked up and explored by postmodernism. The results that these explorations reveal are more interesting than they were perhaps meant to be. They show how the collusion between the colonialist and the national-bourgeois in relegating the

peasant (or the subaltern) breaks down in times of expatriation or forced migration. There is little or no difference between the bourgeois-nationalist and the subaltern in such times, and the entire modernist logic of cultural diversity and its acceptance suddenly fall flat. Bhabha writes:

...the language of rights and obligations, so central to the modern myth of a people, must be questioned on the basis of the anomalous and discriminatory legal and cultural status assigned to migrant, diasporic, and refugee populations. Inevitably, they find themselves on the frontiers between cultures and nations, often on the other side of the law.⁴¹

It is at this point that Bhabha tries to posit his idea of a postcolonial contramodernity that seeks to negotiate a 'new collaborative dimension both within the margins of the nation-space and across boundaries between nations and peoples'.⁴² By using poststructuralist tools Bhabha tries to show in his postcolonial theorizations how the idea of an authoritarian 'West' and its assumptions of colonial modernity completely break down in the face of subaltern history, and the more complicated problems of expatriation and diasporic conditions.⁴³ While using postmodernism as a tool in postcolonialism, Bhabha generally confines himself to socio-political assumptions and rarely moves into sophisticated and complex discussions on the failure of logocentrism. In this context, at least, Bhabha cannot be accused of obscurantism, and deliberate obfuscation of the

politics of representation. In fact, he has used this ploy quite deliberately in terms of theorizing the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World.

Beyond Theory: Enunciation 'Outside the Sentence'

One might notice in Bhabha's movement toward the representation of the Third World, a parallel movement toward postmodernity. I have already discussed in the last chapter how Bhabha sees the point of enunciation as the moment of politics—where all representation is always/already contingent and differential. Although, this might seem to be rather obscure, it is strategically effective in terms of subverting all discursive assumptions of the power-centre. It is also noteworthy, that Bhabha does not see this strategy always as a deliberate ploy on the part of the subaltern, Third-World subject, but notices its automatic presence within the complex paradigm of representation. Given this, one might admit, that Bhabha's postmodern assumptions are not always theoretically complex.

Bhabha's chief purpose in trying to theorize an enunciative moment is to provide for the 'other' a chance for the articulation of his/her culture. The culture of the native or the subaltern has always been seen in Western pedagogy as an objectified presence, an exotic 'other' (Kristeva's Chinese women), a textbook presence in terms of statistical sample surveys or social science syllabi. Bhabha's intention was to make the Third World aware of their subjecthood, to turn them into subjects of their own history and experience. He tries to make them keenly aware of their 'subject' presence

in the historical moment, not as totems or symbols that are homogenized into concept-metaphors of slavery, or laziness, or magic, or anything else for that matter. Bhabha looks at history almost as a performance—as a way of constituting one's self at the moment. This might be through community activities like singing, or dancing, or acting—where each individual subject is keenly aware of his/her own presence within the moment in history.⁴⁴ This moment of enunciation need not be registered in conventional historiography, but the throbbing sense of the self, the awareness of one's presence only helps in countering hegemonic historiography. These individual moments create such multiple subjectivities that the simplistic logic of binary opposition does not hold good.

Thus, the conclusiveness of the discipline of cultural history is contested by these multi-accentual and disjunctive moments of heterogeneous individuality. Bhabha chooses these moments to move beyond theory. The pervasive absence of closure, the creation of innumerable reference points within the rubric of history frustrates theorization, and this is where the theory-practice polarity breaks down:

This 'beyond theory' is itself a liminal form of signification that creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social 'experience' that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities.⁴⁵

This is the cultural space that Roland Barthes describes as 'outside the sentence', that confounds all the constitutive paradigms of Western historiography or pedagogy.⁴⁶

Through this movement beyond theory and outside the sentence Bhabha suggests a movement towards an indeterminism that is essentially postmodern. Noticeably, this movement entails the end of opposition, the end of the politics of polarity into a moment that is dialogic and inevitably contingent:

It is the question of agency, as it emerges in relation to the indeterminate and the contingent, that I want to explore 'outside the sentence'. However, I want to preserve, at all times, that menacing sense in which the non-sentence is contiguous with the sentence, near but different, not simply its anarchic disruption.⁴⁷

What all this entails is the creation of a catachrestic space where the postcolonial subject can re-claim his/her identity through a re-working of the hegemonic concept-metaphors of the West. The agential thrust of the non-sentence or 'outside the sentence' is thus to create free floating signifiers, that are free from the shackles of humanist truth, meaning, and sociality.⁴⁸ The contingency of all these float ambivalently on the borderlines of the sentence and 'outside the sentence', so that positionality is always arbitrary—located beyond closure. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also taken a note of this situation:

Claiming catachresis from a space that one cannot not want to inhabit, yet must criticize is then, the deconstructive predicament of the postcolonial.⁴⁹

Thus, the contingent conditions of agency and enunciative formations of meaning and/or presence create a heteroglossial space where a balance of power is automatically engendered. As Bhabha clearly suggests the strategy of postcolonial reading: 'reading between the lines, taking neither him at his word nor me fully at mine'.⁵⁰ All negotiations thus take place in an intersubjective realm where the agent always, inevitably remains outside the sentence. While speaking about the narrative of social causality, Hannah Arendt also discusses the uncertain nature of political matters that arises out of the indeterministic but contiguous relationship between the 'who' (the agent) and the 'what' (the intersubjective realm).⁵¹ We might conclude this section by saying that Bhabha's use of postmodernism was a way of relocating and reinscribing postcolonial agency (that includes the agency of the Third-World intellectual in the First) through an emphasis on a disjunctive present, 'outside the sentence'. His development of this theoretical form of political agency emphasizes the movement beyond binaries into a historical movement toward hybridity. The basic thrust in his postmodern argument is the instability of truth and the strategic use of historical contingency.

The Attack on Foundational Historiography

The location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World, particularly in the last few years of the twentieth century, saw an increasing rise in the universities across the West, of the study and development of post-foundational modes of thought. A chief reason for this was the failure of

agential thrust, on the part of foundational modes of theorising protest, and a consequent inability to move out of the narratives of power. At the beginning of this chapter I have discussed the troubled waters such terms as 'postcolonialism' and the 'subaltern' had to wade through before they could be accepted. The primary reasons for this were some foundational habits of theoretical agency, and mechanisms of protest could not see beyond these few ways of registering their presence. In one of his essays the historian Gyan Prakash argues how counter-theorizations of nationalism, or Marxism, or anthropology/area studies could not move out of certain vices that are so symptomatic of foundational historiography.⁵² As a result all of these methods of protest could be easily essentialized and hence subsumed by Western hegemony.

Prakash argues how Indian nationalist historiography—something that supposedly countered Orientalism's pervasive generalizations—basically succumbed to an identical logic. There is a lot of sense in this argument, as what the nationalist historians basically did was to transform India as an object of knowledge—from passive to active. Otherwise the basic layout of the study of history remained the same. As Prakash writes:

Nationalist historiographers accepted the patterns set for them by British scholarship. They accepted the periodization of Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim and British periods, later addressed as the ancient, medieval and modern eras; relegated caste to

sections on 'Society', that is, with the history of society with politics left out; and reiterated the long and unchanging existence of Sanskritic Indic civilization.⁵³

That is to say, the only agenda of nationalist historiography was to prove that everything good in India, like spirituality, art or political ideas, had indigenous origins. Otherwise, they had no problems with the framework of the study of history as a discipline. What resulted was the lack of problematization in nationalist historiography. The nationalist historians also saw India as an undivided subject capable of sovereignty and autonomy. The promulgation of this logic of a unitary self and identical will of the Indian nation was also a gross essentialism that this new history could not override. They questioned the authority of Orientalist essentialism using the same paradigms of essentialist assumptions without the least regard for individual subject-position of the Indian citizen. This post-Orientalist nationalist historiography thus subscribed to the same binary categorizations of 'us' and 'them', and these historians wrote longish essays about the drain of wealth from India to Britain, the British industrial policies in India that led to the drying up of Indian industries, and the impoverishment of the Indian economy.⁵⁴ This was how India was being transformed from a passive to an active subject of history—according to the nationalist historians—through a complete rejection of the Orientalist canon. This, they thought, was how the Third World was writing its own history, and a renewed sense of empowerment accompanied

the writing of these nationalist histories. This is where, however, in their 'reasoned' revival of ancient Indian history, in their frantic efforts to argue an ontological presence of India independent of Western representations, that the nationalist historians were falling back to the post-Enlightenment regime of Reason that is ideologically Orientalist.⁵⁵ Little surprise this, as most of the Indian nationalist historians were Western educated elites riding on the wave of modernity.

Homi Bhabha's critique of modernity goes well with this as he argues how nationalist discourses have persistently tried to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress. He finds within such history the same grim language of power that it tends to criticize in Orientalist historiography. The consistent use of Orientalist assumptions tries Bhabha as he realizes the implicit ambivalence that accompanies the emergence of any nation:

It is ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the 'origins' of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality.⁵⁶

Bhabha insists that it is more important to emphasize 'social life' than 'social polity' to realize the inherent ambivalence within a nation. He agrees with Hannah Arendt's view that the modern nation is a hybrid realm where the private and the public easily flow into each other, making the definition,

or the idea of a 'nation' contingent.⁵⁷ He insists on the transitional nature of history and its conceptual indeterminacy, and resists tendencies to read the idea of the 'nation' restrictively—either 'as the ideological apparatus of state power, somewhat redefined by a hasty, functionalist reading of Foucault or Bakhtin; or, in a more utopian inversion, as the incipient or emergent expression of the "national-popular" sentiment preserved in a radical memory'.⁵⁸ This is the reason why he frequently refers to Tom Nairn's description of the nation as 'the modern Janus' where there is both progression and regression, political rationality and irrationality—that is to say a natural ambivalence.⁵⁹ The post-modernist in Bhabha resists any attempt at a 'closure' within the idea of a nation as he sees the nation-space as perpetually evolving, in medias res, at the moment of enunciation. As he clearly expresses in his introduction to *Nation and Narration*, his chief intention as the editor of this anthology has been to reveal the ambivalent margin of the nation-space:

To reveal such a margin is, in the first instance, to contest claims to cultural supremacy, whether these are made from the 'old' post-imperialist metropolitan nations, or on the behalf of the 'new, independent nations of the periphery'.⁶⁰

In this contention Bhabha has moved a step beyond his theorization of mimicry elaborated in the previous chapter. In mimicry there were still implicit connotations of the sense of nationalism from the perspective of the native subject. But

here Bhabha is not talking of a celebratory self-marginalization. This is a more substantial intervention into the very justifications of modernity—progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism—that rationalize the authoritarian tendencies within cultures in the name of national interest. The ambivalent, ever-evolving notion of the nation will blur boundaries and allow an interplay of meanings, whereby cultural identities will become resistant to hegemonic formations. The resultant cultural contamination will initiate a process of cultural production outside the strategies of colonial modernity.

Anthropology and Area Studies

If we move out of the questions of historiography and culture into those of anthropology and area studies we shall notice a similar development in terms of their foundationalist tendencies. Edward Said had initiated this argument in his book *Culture and Imperialism*. While talking about the interdependence of various histories and cultures, and the interaction of contemporary societies with one another, Said seems to be highly critical of the inflated sense of the West about its exclusivity and superiority. He refers to an interesting debate that took place in Stanford University about the modification of their curriculum to include non-European texts in their syllabus. Said notes Bernard Lewis' reaction to this, which was published in *The Wall Street Journal* on May 2, 1989. Said writes:

...Lewis's argument...lumbered forward with the remarkable proposition that since modifications in

the reading list would be equivalent to the demise of Western culture, such subjects (he named them specifically) as the restoration of slavery, polygamy, and child marriage would ensue. To this amazing thesis Lewis added that 'curiosity about other cultures', which he believes is unique to the West, would also come to an end.⁶¹

This paradigm of Western superiority, Said suggests, has continued into modern intellectual history in the development of dominant discourses and disciplinary traditions of science, culture, and sociology. He even criticizes the genealogical discoveries of Michel Foucault or Raymond Williams suggesting how they generally overlooked the imperial experience and its implications while developing their theories.⁶² This might be one of the reasons why, in spite of his deep admiration for Foucault, he rejects Foucault's theorizations in the later part of his career.

But his deepest dissatisfaction perhaps is the failure of the project of area studies, something that had all the promises of becoming a democratic field of work at its outset. A project that had been initiated by the German thinkers Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, modelled on Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur*, soon proved vulnerable to the pressures of Western hegemony.⁶³ The reason for this Said attributes to the striking rise of nationalism in Europe and America during the two centuries between 1745 and 1945. He writes:

...when most European thinkers celebrated humanity or culture they were principally celebrating ideas and values they ascribed to their own national culture, or to Europe as distinct from the Orient, Africa, and even the Americas. What partly animated my study of Orientalism was my critique of the way in which the alleged universalism of fields such as the classics (not to mention historiography, anthropology, and sociology) was Eurocentric in the extreme, as if other literatures and societies had either an inferior or a transcended value.⁶⁴

Erich Auerbach had initiated a mission of civilizational survival in his book *Mimesis*, written while he was in Istanbul, exiled from Nazi Germany. In a sincere effort, Auerbach wanted to examine the complex evolution of European literature from Homer to Virginia Woolf.⁶⁵ Said suggests how, in spite of being praised throughout the Western world, the essential spirit of the book—the dialectical development of literatures across the world—was lost, and along with it the possibility of the development of a tradition of comparative literature. What emerged, ultimately, was the elaboration of the power of the Western world. The development of area studies, something that could initiate a process of secular interpretation of the history of civilization remained confined within a discursive academia and was consequently essentialized. Anthropology, history, philology—disciplines that could successfully develop a secular problematic—unfortunately became allies in the imperial or neo-imperial enterprise. However, as I

have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, although Said was aware of the complexities of overlapping territories and intertwined histories, he ultimately understood the politics of representation in terms of binaries. His ideas of resistance or contrapuntality were based on a counter-discourse that understood the entire problem in terms of domination and freedom, as the logic of postmodernism was still only evolving. Although he could not immediately show a way out, Said had successfully problematized the politics of area studies.

The interest in area studies gained much popularity in the United States in the 1950s, and in the next two decades this euphoria also spread to the Third World. With the end of colonial rule, the tropes of nationalism now focused on discovering the authentic history and culture of India. Anthropological studies and theories of culture formulated a new 'traditional' India that was caste specific.⁶⁶ Representative figures in anthropology such as Louis Dumont argued that the essence of India was hidden in its caste system, and that a thorough knowledge of the caste divisions of India would reveal the true Indian spirit.⁶⁷ His formulation that ritual hierarchy defines India is still popular among social theorists and anthropologists in both parts of the world. What followed from all these formulations was the inevitable essentialization of India in terms of caste. Anthropology as a discipline soon degenerated into an Orientalist trope and the Indian sociologists unwittingly consented to this project. Riding on the new and euphoric wave of developmentalism the Third-World intellectual fell

into the selfsame trap of colonial modernity that now used 'caste' as a tool for neo-Orientalist purposes.

There were also certain inherent difficulties in promoting caste as the essence of Indianness. Although, the existence of the caste-system made the Indian society essentially different from the Western, thereby creating the idea of an independent and authentic India, the very concept of casteism goes against a *modern* and just society. The nationalists however argued that ideally the caste system was an attempt at a stable and harmonious social order and thus could not be segregated from the idea of modernity. The ideal fourfold scheme of *varna* (the *brahmin*, the *kshatriya*, the *vaisya* and the *sudra*) was intended as a non-competitive functional division of labour and did not imply a hierarchy or privilege. Even Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan emphasized the *varna* scheme as a universal form of organic solidarity of the individual and the social order.⁶⁸ Mahatma Gandhi had also asserted that caste division was not divisive in terms of any moral order and that it had nothing to do with religion.⁶⁹ Inspired by such thinkers as these the nationalist historians and sociologists developed volumes of ethnographic material that tried to prove conclusively that the caste system was fundamental to the character of the Indian society.⁷⁰ What they did not realize, however, was that unconsciously they were once again succumbing to the tropes of Orientalism and colonial modernity.⁷¹ However, this is not to reduce the emergent fields of anthropology, development studies and area studies to some crude political determination. Indeed, they helped in exploding the older myths about the

unchangeability of the caste system and linked it to methodological developments in economy and polity.

Marxism as Foundational

The slippage of the area-studies programmes into the paradigms of the caste-system obviously re-instated the binary logic of opposition between Orientalism and native historiography; but at the same time both of them might be held guilty of generalization and essentialism. The Marxist critique of nationalism starts off from this premise, and the Marxists argue how nationalism was structurally incapable of performing the tasks of modernization of colonized Third-World societies. The reason for this was the fact that nationalism promoted the notion of an undivided India—unitary in its conception and opposition—to an identically undivided notion of Europe. Even the division performed in terms of the caste-system was viewed in terms of a unitary structure that rendered a smooth functioning of the societal and communitarian functions. It was not meant as a divisive mechanism that cut the society into many heterogeneous parts. This superstructural development is dismissed summarily by the Marxists as ideological. They also insist on the basically divisive nature of the caste-system, and the kind of political unrest it is capable of creating. In fact they consider this sense of unity promulgated by the casteists as false consciousness. As Sumit Sarkar, the Marxist historian notes:

Historiographical elision has been most powerful of all in respect of caste, and yet it is precisely this

dimension that has shot into unexpected prominence in recent years, with the lower caste rally around the Mandal proposals and the Ayodhya Mandir campaign confronting each other, and BJP leader Advani's Rath-yatra of autumn 1990 having an obvious relationship with high-caste hysteria over reservations.⁷²

The Marxists, rather, tried to write the history of the Third World in terms of the modes of production narrative and from the perspective of political economy. This is the reason why they emphasized the writing of class histories—so that a heterogeneous perspective might be acquired to explode both the Orientalist and the nationalist myths of an undivided India. Obviously, this class based writing of history was more modern than the caste based version. By its refusal to ascribe any fundamental significance to caste, the Marxist argument was able to uphold, without qualification, the legal-political principles of the modern state, and to boldly advocate the cultural project of modernity. They insisted that the writing of non-class histories would suppress the history of the oppressed and accused nationalist historiography of elitist essentialism. The Marxist historians rather wrote histories of movements and rebellions and tried to link these histories with the modes of production narrative.⁷³ In these histories they tried to rupture the myth of the unitary nation by revealing class conflicts, heterogeneity and resistance that were always an intrinsic part of Indian history.

Albeit these valid claims of superiority of Marxist historiography over the nationalist and the casteist, there still remains the problem of representation and representability. In their looking into the histories of oppression and rebellion Marxist historians have indeed laid out a thematic pattern of class struggle and structural conflict that is heterogeneous in nature. Even then, however specific their composition of class, the subject-position of the individual is inevitably compromised. A class or a structure is ultimately resistant to further heterogeneity, and here Marxist historiography succumbs to the claims of foundationalism. My intention here is not to dismiss Marxist historiography by calling it essentialist. What I am trying to suggest is that a class-based or structure-based historiography cannot ultimately represent the claims of a contingent, ever-vacillating subject-position. The theoretical structure of Marxism cannot sustain such locational arbitrariness and this is where it has to give way to post-foundational strategies of reading. One of the focal points of my thesis in this book is the location of the Third-World intellectual in the First World, and as I have already explicated, in order to survive in the midst of pervasive essentialisms, the Third-World intellectual has to assume arbitrary and contingent roles that slip away from all attempts at fixing them to reference frames. Neither nationalism, nor area-studies, nor Marxism can represent their unrepresentability, and hence the obvious preference for postmodernism.

Post-Foundational Historiography: A Possible Way Out

In the above discussion I have tried to establish how neither nationalism, nor Marxism or area studies could successfully historicize the growth and/or development of a truly modern, colonial-capitalist Third World, as they could not ultimately displace the paradigmatic frameworks within which colonialism or Orientalism worked. The need therefore was to move out of all these reference frames and rethink the approach to historiography, so that a sovereign, independent representation of the Third World could be made possible. Such a scheme could only come through if this entire politics of identitarianism could be unsettled. This was one of the chief thrusts of the Subaltern Studies group of historians, whose aim was to recover the history of the marginal groups. These historians, mostly trained in the First World, advocated the 'history-from-below' approach that unsettled the nationalist historiography on the one hand by exploding the myth of a unified India; and the Marxist account of history on the other, which see these histories from below as the preludes to the emergence of a full-fledged class consciousness. The Subaltern Group of historians replace the Marxist idea of class by their concept of subalternity. This subalternity is manifested through a variety of means—social, cultural, linguistic, and economic. Thus, the monolithic idea of history as caste or history as class is deconstructed, and history is narrativized as the unfolding of power relations in terms of society, or culture, or language, or economic considerations. The project of subalternity, therefore, tries to see the discipline of history writing not as

homogeneous, but as differential and contestatory, where each subject-position is defined on its own terms.⁷⁴ Thus the margin (or even beyond) is rescued from the hegemonic essentializations of both the colonialist and the nationalist bourgeois. As Gyan Prakash writes:

...the significance of their project lies in the writing of histories freed from the will of the colonial and national elites. It is this project of resisting the colonial and nationalist discursive hegemonies, through histories of the subaltern whose identity resides in difference, which makes the work of these scholars a significant intervention in third-world historiography.⁷⁵

This interventionist, counter-hegemonic approach was quite well liked by the Third-World intellectuals in the First World. Continuously negotiating with their own subject-position within the First-World academia, they realized how they could very well use this history-from-below approach to negotiate their identity. The contingent nature of the subalternist position would also help them politically in terms of positional shifts that might now be theoretically consolidated. This enthusiasm in the project of the Subaltern historians perhaps led to the publication, in 1988, of a selection of essays of the Subaltern School with a foreword by Edward Said and an editorial note by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.⁷⁶

This enthusiasm of intellectuals such as Said and Spivak in the Subaltern project was not, however, kindly

accepted by Marxist historians of the likes of Sumit Sarkar, as I have already mentioned, or Aijaz Ahmad. They still liked to view the Subaltern project as a continuation of a Marxist logic, whereby the paradigm of a pan-Indian nationalism could be successfully subverted. The Marxist historians saw in the Subaltern project possibilities of writing micro-histories that would question or contest discursive domination.⁷⁷ But these micro-histories would be contextual where both 'fragment' and 'community' would walk hand in hand. History would thus become both contingent and located, and unlike postmodernism will not succumb completely to scepticism and relativism. What the Marxist historians sadly noted was that the entire project of writing subaltern history was in its turn being essentialized by these Third-World intellectuals in the First World. In their anxiety to discover a location for themselves within the Western academy they were overdoing the fetish of the subject as fragment, and thereby the entire project was veering towards postmodernism. Sumit Sarkar, for example, does not hide his irritation in the following jibe at Edward Said:

For *Subaltern Studies*, however, located by its subject matter in a country that has been a postcolonial nation-state for more than four decades, an oppositional stance towards existing forms of nationalism has been felt to be necessary from the beginning. The situation was rather different from that facing a member of a Palestinian diaspora still in quest of independent nationhood. This opposition was reconciled with the Saidian framework through

the assumption that the postcolonial nation-state was no more than a continuation of the original, Western, Enlightenment project imposed through colonial discourse.⁷⁸

Although this kind of a logic cannot be dismissed summarily as the traditional Marxist's distaste for postmodern uncertainty, there is ample scope to critique such a proposition. First, what these Third-World writers in the First World have been trying to do is to problematize the space of the subject-position of the subordinated. Who is subordinated? How is he/she subordinated? Whether there can be many kinds of subordinations (including their own)? These are the questions that these intellectuals have tried to address through their ideas of contrapuntal reading (Edward Said), or catachresis (Gayatri Spivak), or hybridity (Homi Bhabha). The Marxist historians have readily embraced the subject-position of the subaltern because of their prolonged experience as subordinated subjects. What they failed to realize was the fact that even the experiences or expressions of subordination are also discursively formulated. The attempts made by Said or Spivak or Bhabha have been to try and see how this logic of subordination can be unsettled through the creation of a contingent and ever-evolving and discontinuous Third Space.

Secondly, the presence of these intellectuals in the First World has had far reaching consequences. Let us admit that their credibility as intellectuals and their scholarship are beyond doubt. Their location in the First World and the

consequent addressing of the question of agency has opened up newer spaces of negotiation between the Third and the First Worlds, which would have remained unforeseen otherwise. The insistent emphasis on the problems of representation and subject-position have aroused and incited the subordinated others in the First World. Minority voices of the socialists, the feminists, the radicals have mingled with these voices from the Third World, thereby internationalizing the problem of subordination and opening up multiple spaces for negotiating identity. The engagement with these minority voices in the First World has thus pluralized the possibilities of writing post-Orientalist histories; also, the coming together of multiple disciplines has led to consistent counter-hegemonic movements that have created a space beyond discipline. This conjunctural condition of postmodernity, created by people such as Spivak or Bhabha, moves beyond any gesture toward classification and distillation. This post-foundational democratic space insists on a politics of difference where cultures and identities arrested by hegemonic essentializations can be successfully released. Gyan Prakash, for example, understands how it is difficult today to conceptualize India and the West as two monolithic, separate entities, fixed within their own demarcated co-ordinates. He recognizes Gandhiji's saintliness and non-violence as qualities not completely absent in leaders from the West. And he also sees how the trajectory of Indian nationalism and its various strategies to be clearly embedded in Western forms of civil and political conceptions, which has, in a way,

given rise to a second colonization without the direct interference of the West:

...then what is left of the neatly separated 'India' and the 'West'? Such destabilization of identities and crossing of carefully policed boundaries promise a new third-world historiography that will resist both nativist romanticization and Orientalist distancing. This post-foundational move, implicit in the emerging writings, affiliates the new third-world historiography with post-structuralism, and together they both echo the postmodernist decentering of unitary subjects and hegemonic histories.⁷⁹

To conclude, therefore, I feel that in spite of certain critiques of their location, the Third-World intellectuals in the First World have been successfully able to problematize the politics of representation. This is both in terms of representing the Third World, as well as the problematics of their own location. The resistance to all 'closures', although extremely postmodern (to the dislike of many), has at least made possible the idea of exchange without the active involvement of power. Representational contingency, vacillating reference points, a movement beyond disciplinary paradigms have all added up to the consolidation of this resistance to closure. The proliferation of narratives, many and varied versions of history, and their provisional nature have consistently refused the erections of new foundations in history, culture and knowledge. Herein lies the success of these intellectuals from the Third World (primarily the three

I have discussed here) in creating a basis of post-foundational historiography where the possibilities for negotiation multiply every moment. The writing of history, therefore, becomes a contestatory act that engages all the possible relations of domination and counter-domination in one massive action of textuality. Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha should thus be attributed their rightful place in history (or the dismantling of certain kinds of history). In their own ways they have negotiated the representation of the Third World in the First, through intricate and commendable theoretical methodology. Their works have indeed opened up newer theoretical spaces where even such canonical distinctions as the Third World and the First World can be revised and re-thought. It is difficult here and now to predict whether their enterprise will ultimately succeed in the long run, but it suffices to say that in their own individual ways they have left indelible marks on the study of social theory and historiography. Simply put, there can be (and should be) many critiques of their works, but the three of them have indeed revolutionized the way the Third World (and parts of the First) thinks today. Edward Said died while I was working on this book, but the other two are still writing. We eagerly wait to see where they lead us to in terms of the politics of representation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Said has always referred to the works of these two predominantly humanist thinkers, and looked at them as his formative influences. He has consistently referred to some of their works, such as, Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1946; rpt. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Bollingen Books, 1965); Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).
2. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; rpt. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001), pp.340-1.
3. Ibid., p.341.
4. Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism' in Padmini Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.295.
5. Ibid., p.301.
6. Ibid., pp.294-5.
7. See, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed., Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), p.114.
8. Spivak, 'Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga' in *Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*,

ed., Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.27.

9. Ibid., pp.26-7.
10. Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura', p.294.
11. Spivak, 'Bonding in Difference' in *Selected Works*, p.22.
12. Ibid., p.21.
13. See Spivak, 'Feminism and Critical Theory' in *Selected Works*, p.70.
14. Ibid., p.66.
15. Ibid., p.62.
16. Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Gayatri Spivak: The Deconstructive Twist' in *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (New York: Verso, 1997), p.92.
17. See Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, pp.203-36.
18. Ibid., p.205.
19. See Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.259-64.
20. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, p.224.
21. Ibid., p.217.
22. Gayatri Spivak scathingly analyses some 'elite' historiographic approaches of the Western world with the

- textual help of Mahasweta Devi's short story 'Stanadayini'. For her analysis of these reductionist approaches see, Gayatri Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World' in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.247-64.
23. This is, of course, particularly true of Julia Kristeva's study of Chinese women that Spivak so detests. See, Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars, 1977). For Spivak's critique of Kristeva's position see, 'French Feminism in an International Frame', in *In Other Worlds*, pp.134-53.
 24. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography' in *Selected Works*, p.214.
 25. Ibid., p.214.
 26. Ibid., p.215.
 27. Ibid., p.217.
 28. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Supplementing Marxism' in Bernd Magnus and S. Cullenberg, eds., *Whither Marxism? Global Crises in the International Context* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.115.
 29. Sumit Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies' in *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; rpt. 2005), p.88.
 30. See Spivak, 'Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors' in *Selected Works*, p.296.

31. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Languages of Class, Ideologies of Immigration' in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992; rpt. 2001), p.84.
32. For Richard Rorty's ideas on modernity and liberalism see, Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
33. Homi Bhabha, "'Race", Time and the Revision of Modernity' in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.342-3. In the endnote to his reference to these authors Bhabha gives a selection of their works that have addressed the problem of modernity: i) Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), esp. chapters 11 and 12. ii) Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London : Allen Lane, 1979). iii) Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend*, trans. George Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). iv) C. Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, ed., J.B. Thomason (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1978), esp. Part II, 'History, Ideology and the Social Imaginary'.
34. Homi Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency' in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994; rpt. 2004), p.251.
35. For a discussion on Bhabha's ideas of 'translation', 'enunciation' and 'cultural difference' see the previous chapter.

36. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.247.
37. For a discussion on the postcolonial Third-World intellectual's engagement with the metropolitan First World and the question of agency see Edward W. Said, 'Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture', *Raritan*, vol.9, no.3 (1990), pp.27-50.
38. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.247.
39. For an analysis of the existence of a structure of duality in the nationalist mass movement see, for example, David Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); Majid Hayat Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918-1922* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978); Arvind Narayan Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-economic Change, 1900-1980* (Delhi: Manohar, 1983).
40. Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nation and Its Peasants' in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), pp.9-10.
41. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.251.
42. Ibid., pp.251-2.
43. Stuart Hall has comprehensively discussed how the ideological sign is always multi-accentual and how its

- articulation is always contingent and differential. See, Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso, 1988).
44. Paul Gilroy has discussed how the Blacks search for their identity through the dialogic, performative 'community' of black music—like rap, dub, scratching etc.—through which they constitute the sense of selfhood. See, Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), Chapter 5.
 45. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.257.
 46. See Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. R. Miller (New York: Hill, 1975), p.49.
 47. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.261.
 48. It is interesting to see how the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton also takes note of such a situation while critiquing the libertarian pessimism of post-structuralism. See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London : Verso, 1991).
 49. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Postcoloniality and Value' in P. Collier and H. Gaya-Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.228.
 50. Bhabha, 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern' in *The Location of Culture*, p.269.
 51. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), pp.175-95.

52. Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, pp.163-90.
53. Ibid., p.168.
54. See, for example, R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, 2vols. (1901, rpt. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950). Bipan Chandra has also discussed at length this tendency of nationalist historiography. See, Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1966).
55. A discussion on this can be found in Partha Chatterjee, 'The Cunning of Reason' in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, pp.167-71 as collected in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
56. Homi Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in *Nation and Narration* (1990; rpt. New York: Routledge, 1995), p.1.
57. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*.
58. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in *Nation and Narration*, p.3.
59. See Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981).
60. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in *Nation and Narration*, p.4.
61. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.43.

62. See *ibid.*, p.47.
63. See Erich Auerbach, 'Philology and *Weltliteratur*', trans. M. and E.W. Said, *Centennial Review* 13 (Winter 1969), pp.1-17; see also Said's discussion of this work in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp.1-9.
64. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.51.
65. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). See also Edward Said's essay 'Secular Criticism' in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.31-53.
66. See for example, M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1966) and David G. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, 2 Vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).
67. See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). See also Dipankar Gupta's criticism of Dumont's assessment of the caste system in India: Dipankar Gupta, 'Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes', in *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, nos.46-8 (17 and 24 November and 1 December 1984), pp.1955-58, pp.2003-5, pp.2049-53.
68. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (1939; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

69. M.K. Gandhi, 'Dr. Ambedkar's Indictment II' in *Collected Works* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1976), 63:153.
70. Some relevant examples are G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1957); M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (Bombay: Asia, 1962); and M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1966).
71. Partha Chatterjee calls this 'Oriental exceptionalism'. For his fascinating critique of the concept of caste (a miniscule part of which I have tried to elaborate here) see Chatterjee, 'The Nation and its Outcasts' in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, pp.173-99, as collected in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*.
72. Sarkar, 'Identity and Difference: Caste in the Formation of Ideologies of Nationalism and Hindutva' in *Writing Social History*, p.359.
73. See, for example, P.C. Joshi, ed., *1857 Rebellion* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1957); A.R. Desai, ed., *Peasant Struggles in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979); Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963).
74. For a discussion on this see Ranajit Guha, 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India' in *Subaltern Studies I* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.1-8. Sumit Sarkar, the Marxist historian, was certainly quite critical of Guha's arguments, and finds in them a source of 'rich

- paradox'. See Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*' in *Writing Social History*, pp.92-3.
75. Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, pp.180-1.
 76. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
 77. See, for example, Ranajit Guha, 'Chandra's Death' in *Subaltern Studies V* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) pp.135-65; Sumit Sarkar, 'The Kalki-Avatar of Bikrampur: A Village Scandal in Early Twentieth Century Bengal' in *Subaltern Studies VI* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.1-53; Gyanendra Pandey, "'Encounters and Calamities": The History of a North Indian Qasba in the Nineteenth Century' in *Subaltern Studies III* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp.231-70.
 78. Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in *Subaltern Studies*' in *Writing Social History*, p.93.
 79. Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, p.185.

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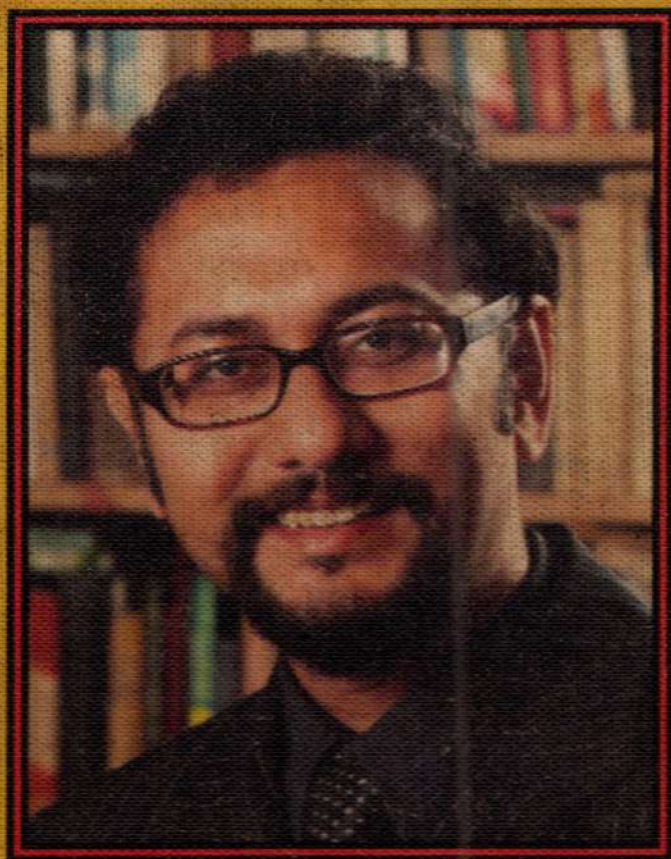
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THE IMPACT OF THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES